

R.A.W. POWER

ANTHOLOGIES

VOLUME THREE



Historical fiction

Robin Hood and Little John Book Three

by Pierce Egan the Younger

With summaries of

Happiness Oath Aesop and British Culture Aesop's Legacy of Liberty Aesop and Sun Tzu

And excerpts from

Twelfth Century Recipes

by Dawn Corleone

Dedicated to
Rachel, David, Allison, Amy and Amanda

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Summary of *R.A.W. Power Anthologies*, Volume Three

This charming retelling of Robin Hood's adventures brings to life the spirited escapades of the legendary outlaw and his merry band. The book follows Robin Hood, his wife Marian, and their band of followers, as they navigate the challenges posed by corrupt authorities and societal injustices in medieval England.

At the beginning of the story, we find Robin in the vibrant Sherwood Forest, where his band consists of loyal and skilled companions, including Little John, Will Scarlet, and Friar Tuck. Together, they embody the spirit of camaraderie and adventure. Robin is frequently depicted as a warm-hearted leader, known for his kindness towards the less fortunate and his determination to right wrongs inflicted on the oppressed by the Norman aristocracy and the Church.

Main Themes and Characters

Robin and Marian's Love

The narrative emphasizes Robin's deep love for Marian, who prefers the simplicity and safety of the green wood to a wealthy lifestyle. Their relationship is characterized by warmth, mutual respect, and a shared commitment to their ideals.

The Outlaw's Code

Robin Hood's band operates under a strict code of conduct. While they rob from the rich, they ensure they do not harm ordinary people, particularly those who work hard for their living. Robin maintains that violence is to be avoided unless absolutely necessary, fostering a community based on mutual support and loyalty.

Justice vs. Corruption

The moral contrast in the story is striking. The wealthy landowners and church figures, such as the Bishop of Hereford, epitomize greed and oppression, constantly scheming to capture Robin and bring him to justice. Robin's clever strategies, often involving trickery and humor, underscore the battle between good and evil.

Key Plot Points

Marian's Choice

Marian's decision to dwell with Robin in the woods rather than accepting a more comfortable but constraining life embodies the themes of love versus social expectation.

The Bishop's Plot

The corrupt Bishop seeks to capture Robin, leading to a dramatic confrontation that highlights the absurdity and lack of justice in the system. Robin's ingenious methods of evading capture and his ultimate confrontation with the Bishop serve as both comedy and commentary on the abuse of power.

Love Blossoms

The story also focuses on the blossoming romances among Robin's companions, providing a lighter, more playful balance to the otherwise serious themes. For instance, Much the Miller's son and Barbara develop a bond infused with humor and affection.

Clever Disguise

One memorable encounter involves Robin disguising himself as an old woman to escape pursuit, showcasing his cunning and resourcefulness.

The Dinner with the Bishop

In a humorous twist, Robin and his men capture the Bishop, using this chance to turn the tables, leading to scenes filled with laughter and unexpected camaraderie.

Overall, *Robin Hood and Little John*, Book Three captures the essence of adventure, romance, and moral integrity. At its heart, it is about fighting against oppression and advocating kindness and camaraderie. Robin Hood's legacy as the "king of the outlaws" is celebrated through tales of bravery, cleverness, and an undying sense of justice, proving that the struggle for right can bring joy and laughter, even amidst adversity. This blend of humor, love, and social commentary ensures that such stories remain timeless and relatable, resonating with audiences of all ages.

In one enthralling chapter of Robin Hood's adventures, we witness a series of comical and chaotic events sparked by an unexpected encounter between Robin Hood and the Bishop of Hereford.

The Bishop's Mishap

The chapter begins with an amusing incident where Robin, disguised as an old woman, inadvertently causes the Bishop's horse to buck violently. This leads to the bishop receiving a severe bump on the head and a wound across his forehead, prompting him to retaliate against a fallen soldier, mistaking him for Robin. This set off a chaotic chain of events, with Robin cleverly using the disguise to escape the bishop's men.

The Capture of Robin Hood

Despite his injuries, the bishop, incensed by the humiliation and pain, orders a captured man (believed to be Robin Hood) to be bound and taken for execution. However, Robin quickly regroups with his loyal merry men, including Little John, Will Scarlet, and Much, who ensure they are prepared for the bishop's arrival.

The Clever Play of Disguise

As they wait in ambush, Robin Hood reveals his disguise to his companions, which works in his favor. He devises a plan to outsmart the bishop not just through combat, but also with wit and conversation. When the bishop arrives, Robin Hood threatens him indirectly, revealing his identity and exposing the bishop's unscrupulous nature.

The Conditions of Release

Instead of executing the bishop, Robin Hood gives the cleric a chance to redeem himself by agreeing to conditions that include the promise of charity towards the poor and swearing an oath of honesty. The bishop, despite his initial reluctance, agrees to Robin's terms, showcasing the clever negotiating skills of Robin Hood.

The Mass in the Green Wood

To the surprise of the bishop, Robin Hood insists on performing a mass right there in the green wood, which unsettles the bishop. The mass, conducted with sincerity by the outlaws, astonishes the bishop, who sees their devotion and respect for religion. This unexpected turn emphasizes that Robin and his men exist outside the law yet embody a moral code that surpasses their legal status.

Laughter and Joy

Following the solemnity of the mass, the scene transitions back to merriment. The merry men, having captured the bishop and his followers, share a banquet in the woods that includes delightful food and ale—much to the bishop's chagrin. Robin Hood turns the tables, making the bishop accommodate his merry men, showcasing Robin's duality as both a rogue and a man of honor.

The Bishop's Return

In the end, the bishop is sent off back to his abbey in disgrace, riding backwards on his horse, further emphasizing Robin Hood's clever antics and innate ability to subvert authority humorously and smartly.

Several chapters not only illustrates Robin Hood's indomitable spirit and cleverness but also explores themes of justice, charity, and the laughter found amidst strife. The interplay between the outlaw and the law, particularly through humor and wit, captivates readers, ensuring that the tales of Robin Hood continue to be rich in both excitement and moral lessons.

Love Blossoms and Weddings

Rupert's Proposal

The story opens with Rupert, who is encouraged by Will to pursue the affection of Mabel. Their playful exchange is interrupted, and in the ensuing excitement, it becomes clear that love is in the air among Will's brothers as they all prepare for quick marriages.

Marriages of the Merry Men

Will's brothers each successfully woo their chosen partners, despite the brevity of their courtships. The wedding day is filled with joy, attracting locals from near and far to celebrate the unions. An atmosphere of merriment characterizes the event, showcasing dances and feasts that make the villagers very happy.

The Day of Celebration

Festivities and Fun

The scene is set for a splendid wedding ceremony under a clear blue sky. Amidst the nuptials, the characters express humor and camaraderie, marked by playful banter among friends and merry men as they enjoy the celebration.

Emphasis on Togetherness

The familiarity and unity of the festive occasion emphasize the joyous relation shared among townsfolk and Robin Hood's band. The happiness shared among couples, surrounded by friends and family, reveals a contrast to the darker deeds that often characterize their outlaw lives.

A Shift in Focus: Crimes and Conflicts

Sheriff's Machinations

As Robin and his band indulge in joy, the Sheriff of Nottingham schemes to capture Robin Hood. Hearing rumors of Robin's engagements, he plans secretly and gets reinforced troops to attack the outlaws.

On the Trail of Trouble

Tension builds as tensions culminate in a confrontation. Little John, unaware, is eventually captured during a surprise attack led by the Sheriff and his men, highlighting the dangers lurking even in times of joy.

Rescue and Retribution

Bravery in Danger

Fortunately, amidst the chaos, Will Scarlet manages to escape and seeks help from Robin. His loyalty is a testament to the close-knit bonds of friendship and respect in their society.

The Planned Rescue

Determined to save his captured friend, Robin constructs a strategic plan to dismantle the Sheriff's forces using clever deception, coupling it with swift action to rescue his captured companions.

Overcoming the Odds

The story highlights various quests of valor from Robin's band, emphasizing their loyalty to one another through thick and thin. They successfully defeat the Sheriff's men after cleverly outsmarting them with their knowledge of the forest and weaponry skills.

Finale and Futures Brightening

Restoration of Peace

Their victory restores confidence in their strength, leading Robin and his band to reflect on their adventures. The joyous wedding foreshadows not just romance but also a spirit of resilience against tyranny.

Rekindling Friendships

As Robin reunites with friends, there's an air of gratitude and camaraderie. They enjoy the beauty around them, with love and celebration once more emerging as the core themes in the lives of the merry men.

Merriment and Morale

Through the lens of Robin Hood's tale, themes of love, friendship, resilience, and camaraderie shine brightly as the merry men navigate the complexities of romance and rivalries. Their adventures remind readers that even in the darkest times, togetherness and dedication can lead to joyous outcomes and triumphant resolutions against adversity.

In the adventures of Robin Hood, we see an exciting encounter between Robin Hood, a legendary outlaw known for robbing the rich to help the poor, and a stranger named Sir Guy of Gisborne, who has come to confront him. The story unfolds in a dense forest filled with suspense, archery contests, and a fierce duel showcasing Robin's extraordinary skills.

Key Characters

Robin Hood

The clever and skilled archer who becomes the hero of the underprivileged.

Sir Guy of Gisborne

A formidable knight who seeks to kill Robin Hood to prove his prowess and gain fame.

Little John

Robin's loyal companion, who supports him in his adventures.

Main Events

Initial Encounter

The story begins with a stranger, Sir Guy, who is lost in the woods but is actually looking for Robin Hood. Robin, cheerful and confident, offers to guide the man through the forest in exchange for information about his quest.

Friendly Challenge

Robin Hood challenges Sir Guy to an archery contest, showcasing his incredible marksmanship. He hits targets with ease, while the knight struggles to match his skill. This highlights Robin's talent and adds tension as the competition grows.

Duel Preparation

After a series of challenges, Sir Guy reveals his true intentions. He draws his sword, declaring that he has sworn to kill Robin, which sets the stage for their intense fight. Robin coolly accepts the challenge, claiming that they will fight to the death.

The Duel

The duel between Robin and Sir Guy is fierce. Robin uses his agility to avoid Sir Guy's powerful strikes. When Robin momentarily falters, he calls for strength from the Virgin Mary, which revitalizes him, allowing him to regain the upper hand.

Victory and Disguise

Ultimately, Robin triumphs, killing Sir Guy. To avoid detection and continue his journey, he disguises himself in Sir Guy's clothes and takes the knight's severed head to deceive the men waiting for news of Robin's demise.

Relief and Celebration

Upon finding his way to a group of men, Robin, still disguised as Sir Guy, announces his victory, which causes confusion among his foes. Meanwhile, Little John and the Merry Men celebrate Robin's cleverness and courage.

Major Themes

Cunning vs. Strength

Throughout the story, Robin Hood's intelligence often outshines raw power. His resourcefulness allows him to face formidable opponents.

Loyalty and Friendship

The bond between Robin and Little John exemplifies loyalty and camaraderie, a vital aspect of their adventures.

Justice and Valor

Robin Hood represents the fight against oppression, making him a symbol of hope for the underprivileged and a target for those in power.

This narrative depicts the legendary escapades of Robin Hood, blending bravery, wit, and the timeless battle between good and evil. Through cunning plans, skilled archery, and fierce loyalty, Robin Hood emerges not only as a heroic outlaw but also as a beloved defender of the downtrodden in medieval England. His encounters in the forest highlight his dual ability to engage in thrilling conflicts while maintaining his code of honor and justice. Overall, this tale captivates readers with its mix of adventure, humor, and heart.

The tale of "*Robin Hood and Little John*" captures the legendary figure's adventures and embodies themes of friendship, justice, and the duality of human nature. This particular account follows King Richard and his merry band of outlaws through their various escapades and trials.

Key Characters and Their Roles

Robin Hood

The principal character, known for his archery skills and his dedication to helping the poor by redistributing wealth taken from the rich.

King Richard

The rightful king who dons the guise of a commoner to mix with his people, showcasing his humility and commitment to justice.

Little John

Robin's loyal companion, representing unwavering loyalty and strength.

Maid Marian

Robin's love interest, embodying kindness and courage throughout the story.

Major Themes

Social Justice

The narrative emphasizes the importance of standing against tyranny and oppression. Robin Hood's actions resonate with the struggles of the common folk against the wealthy and corrupt.

Friendship and Loyalty

The bond between Robin and his followers, especially Little John, highlights camaraderie. Their discussions reflect a sense of shared purpose and the importance of loyalty among comrades.

Human Nature

The text explores the complexities of human character, discussing how individuals can shift between admiration and fear based on circumstances. For example, while the townspeople cheer Robin Hood when he is in favor, they would also turn against him if times were tough.

Plot Overview

As the story unfolds, we see King Richard and his companions navigating through various encounters. This includes Robin Hood showcasing his exceptional archery skills, even engaging in friendly competition with the king. The townspeople initially misconstrue their presence in the town, leading to chaos, but soon rally around Robin when they realize he means no harm.

Robin Hood's charm wins the hearts of the people, and despite his outlaw status, he enjoys widespread admiration. He advocates for a noble knight, Sir Richard of the Lee, aiding him in reclaiming his lands wrongfully usurped. This illustrates Robin's character as not just an outlaw but a champion of the oppressed.

Conflict and Resolution

The tension escalates when Robin Hood and his men face threats from those in authority, particularly in the form of the Sheriff of Nottingham. Their battles highlight the fight against oppression, where Robin often outsmart his foes with strategy and skill rather than brute force.

The story takes a poignant turn as it delves into themes of love and loss with the character of Maid Marian, who tragically falls victim to violence. Her death becomes a pivotal moment for Robin, signifying the deeply personal costs of his and Little John's fight against tyranny. The story concludes with Robin Hood's own demise, illustrating the bittersweet victory of idealism over reality. This leaves Little John grief-stricken but reflective of the lessons learned throughout their journey together.

"Robin Hood and Little John" is rich with moral lessons and emotional depth, providing a reflection on the nature of justice, the importance of loyalty, and the ultimate sacrifices made in the name of love and friendship. Robin Hood emerges not only as a heroic outlaw but also as a symbol of resilience against oppression and the enduring nature of love and loyalty even in the face of tragedy. Ultimately, the tale encapsulates the timeless struggle between good and evil, making Robin Hood a hero for the ages.



EDITOR OF "THE HOME CIRCLE" AND AUTHOR OF "WAT TYLER",
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"THE LONDON APPRENTICE", ETC.
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Wm. Thackeray

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

The materials for a life of Robin Hood are but scanty; for, although his fame is universal, the existing details of his life are but few, and so surrounded by the mists and obscurity of age, that but little certain can be gathered. Many traditions have been handed down respecting him, bearing some stamp of authority, if it be only in the fact that the feats narrated are within the bounds of credibility, while they illustrate the customs and manners of the period; yet, on the other hand, there are many which are quite beyond the pale of human belief, and must be discarded accordingly.

Among his biographers, some have contended for the nobility of his birth; others have repudiated it: the latter have labored hard to support the proofs they have advanced, but they have little foundation in fact, and, in truth, tend more to mystify than to enlighten the enquirer on this subject. The view taken by one writer on this question, though not original, is, perhaps, nearer the truth than any other speculation concerning the famous hero which has yet been formed. It is, that he was the last Saxon who made a positive stand against the dominancy of the Normans; that, in fact, his predatory attacks upon them were but the national efforts of one who endeavoured to remove the proud foot of a conqueror from the neck of his countrymen.

His means were all unequal to accomplish this noble and daring design; but his efforts were unceasing, and must have been the source of constant alarm and harass to the Normans within his three counties, as well as of much uneasiness to the governments under which he lived.

But this, though probable and feasible, is, after all, only a speculation; there is no positive evidence to prove it, although the collateral proofs are very powerful. His popularity among the common people was universal, and has come down to us as fresh and untarnished as it must have been in his own day. There is not an authority but has a good word for him. Fordun, a writer and a priest in the fourteenth century, calls him *ille famosissimus siccarius*, "that most celebrated robber". Major styles him "the most humane and the prince of all robbers." He was compared by the author of a curious Latin poem, dated July 1304, to William Wallace, the hero of Scotland. The renowned Camden speaks of him as "the gentlest of thieves." Shakespeare, in *As You Like It*, in his description of the Duke's mode of life, in allusion to its

happiness, says "He is already in the Forest of Arden, and a many merry men with him, and there they live like the Old Robin Hood of England and fleet the time carelessly as they did in the Golden World." Drayton, a charming poet, in his *Polybion*, a work of extraordinary ability, thus characterises him:

*What often times he took, he shared amongst the poor.
The widow in distress he graciously reliev'd,
And remedied the wrongs of many a virgin griev'd;
He from the husband's bed no married woman wan,
But to his mistress dear, his loved Marian,
Was ever constant know.*

Geoffrey Chaucer hath named him in kind terms: indeed, were we to enumerate all who have made mention of his name in their works, in strains of eulogy and tones of panegyric, we should exhaust the patience of our readers; we may sum them up in the words of a gentleman who has most ably edited a very handsome edition of the "*Robin Hood Ballads*," and whose title to his opinion, from his very close research into the subject, is unquestionable. In concluding his life, he says, "He was a man who, in a barbarous age, and under a complicated tyranny, displayed a spirit of freedom and independence which has endeared him to the common people whose cause he maintained (for all opposition to tyranny is the cause of the people); and in spite of the malicious endeavors of pitiful monks, by whom history was consecrated to the crimes and follies of titled ruffians and sainted idiots, to suppress all record of his patriotic exertions and virtuous acts, will render his name immortal."

This is an opinion formed after the most careful and impartial investigation of almost every record existing respecting him extant, and it goes far to bear out the opinion upon his real position, and the object by which he was influenced, already mentioned.

He has been the subject of poems, ballads, songs, and versification, without number, of dramatic exhibitions, written by the best skilled poets of the time. For years, May Day never passed without seeing Robin Hood, Maid Marian, and their renowned followers, among the motley members of the festivals, and Robin Hood is, perhaps, the only instance of a man of his class, although not actually canonized, having "a festival allotted to him and solemn games, instituted in honor of his memory;

which were celebrated until the latter end of the sixteenth century, not by the populace only, but by kings or princes, and grave magistrates, and that as well in Scotland as in England; being considered, in the former country, of the highest political importance, and essential to the civil and religious liberties of the people."

His character, traced through every rhyme, ballad, song, tradition, proverb, or tale, in which he figures, is that of a man noble in spirit, unequaled in courage and daring, active and powerful, prudent, patient, just in his awards, generous and kind hearted in his dispensations, of charity unbounded, and so full of every estimable quality, that he was not only devotedly beloved by his followers – no instance of anyone proving unfaithful or treacherous appearing in any ballad or tradition extant – but he was revered by the people at large, at least, of the three counties in which he ranged, as a generous benefactor – as the true and faithful friend who stood between them, starvation, injury, and oppression.

In the following pages the Author had no material for the earlier portion of Robin Hood's life but such as his imagination supplied him with; the latter portion embodies the exploits contained in the best ballads yet existing, and he trusts, from the extraordinary success with which this humble effort of a youthful pen has been attended, that in combining the imaginative with all he could obtain of the actual, he has not failed in his desire to please.

In conclusion, he wishes to make especial mention that this is the ONLY edition which he has revised with scrupulous care, and, without abridging, in many parts re-written such portions as appeared to him weak or defective.

Entered at Stationer's Hall, 1850
A Slight Token of Esteem and Gratitude, for many kind and
affectionate services,
The accompanying, humble production, in all sincerity of heart, is
inscribed to
BENJAMIN WEBSTER, ESQ.,
(Lessee of The Theatres Royal Haymarket and Adelphi)
By his highly obliged and attached friend, Pierce Egan

Dawn Corleone's Foreward

We transcribed and edited ***Robin Hood and Little John*** to re-create both digital and printed editions that didn't reflect the damage suffered to the original, centuries-old copy. That damage made the archived, digital version less than a pleasure to read.

The original archaic and British-English spellings were retained in the transcription, but we corrected several typographical oversights that the original proof readers failed to uncover. An abundance of words that may appear to a modern reader to be typographical errors in this remastered edition are, in fact, now-outdated spellings.

We did not condense any part of the story. As is often the case with serialized stories, publishing deadlines that conflicted with author rough drafts resulted in the concluding chapters speeding the narrative's pace and minimizing the quality of detail that was the standard earlier in the story.

To provide added perspective, we annotated and included a Medieval map of England immediately after this foreward.

We added definitions of some of the lesser known, outdated vocabulary.

Except in the most extreme cases, we retained the original punctuation, the run-on paragraphs and the run-on sentences. Many words like 'merrie and merry', phrases like 'by-the-bye and bye-the-bye' (Also 'by-and-bye' and 'bye-and-bye') and surnames like 'Lindsay and Lindsey' were left with whichever spelling was originally used at their locations in the story.

Mr Egan's innumerable uses of '*ellipsis*' — omitting words to create a conversational tone — were also retained. (For example: 'We must there' instead of 'We must go there')

For the sake of clarity, we re-positioned many of the original illustrations to more relevant locations in the story. We reduced their sizes to improve their visual appeal. (Their original placements often represented previews of future chapters of the serialized story and, frequently, they were not accurately placed when the serialized issues were assembled into the anthology of the completed work. Multiple artists account for the lack of uniformity in the appearances of various characters in this presentation of the legends.)

We retained the use of the surname 'Hood', which Egan adopted in Chapter 2. As a later evolution of the family name 'Head' or 'Hode' (according to Mr Egan), it would have more accurately appeared much later in the story. (In Chapter 2, Robin's foster father is referred to as both 'Gilbert Head' and 'Gilbert Hood'.)

We retained references to the 'merk' or the 'mark', a coin that wasn't circulated in England until over 300 years after the events described in *Robin Hood*. In at least a few of the original ballads that are cited by the author, 'merks' were identified as 'pounds' or 'poundes'. (At the later, actual period of its use, the merk's value was approximately the same as a shilling. However, in this story, a single 'gold merk' was a sufficient offer for the purchase of a cow and nearly equal to the daily income of a successful feudal estate. But, at other times in this story, it was referred to as 'a sorry sum' or as little more than walking-around-money)

We also retained references to 'Lincoln Green' which wasn't referred to by that name until 300 years after the time of Robin Hood.

The original anthology, published in 1840, was assembled from the forty-one issue series that was published in 1839 and 1840 by Foster and Hextall. This 1850, author re-edited, anthology of the series was one of many serializations and books that followed Egan's initial publication date. These works included five re-serializations of his original story throughout the 1840s.

In years following, other authors published an edition of the old Robin Hood ballads, *Robin Hood and His Merrie Foresters*, *Maid Marian*, *the Forest Queen*, *Little John and Will Scarlett*, and *The Outlaws of Sherwood Forest*.

This serialized version of the Robin Hood legend was popular during the youth of Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain), so it is believed to be the version that his fictional character, Tom Sawyer, found inspirational for his adventures during that same period in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. ("I am Robin Hood, as thy caitiff carcase soon shall know.", etc.)

However, some sources have claimed that the story *Robin Hood and His Merrie Foresters* inspired Twain, despite the fact that it was less dramatic (making it less appealing to young males) and it was published after the Egan treatment of the story. Mr. Twain is, not surprisingly, still unavailable for clarification or comment.

Perhaps it was from both authors' interpretations of the legends, and from the Biblical personalities and events that many of the original legends seem to have contemporized.

The Egan story was written for adults, but it was so popular among young boys that it immediately inspired serializations and books that were written specifically for the youth market in Great Britain and the United States, making this book a great-great-godfather of comic books and graphic novels.



Robin Hood and Little John

Book 3

Chapter 1

*Then among streams and flowers,
The little winged powers
Went singing carols without torch or bow:
The nymphs and shepherds sat,
Mingling with innocent chat,
Sports and low whispers; and with whispers low,
Kisses that would not go.*

----- Leigh Hunt

*My lands are sett to wad, Robin.
Until a certain day.
To a rich abbot here besides,
Of St. Mary's Abbeye.
I have none other, then, said the knight,
The very sooth to say:
Except that it be our dear ladye,
Who never failed me a day.*

*By dear worthy God, then, Robin, he said,
Ye may search all England throwe;
Yet find me never unto my pay,
A truer better borrowe.*

----- Robin Hood Ballad

Marian kept her word, notwithstanding the persuasions of Robin Hood to the contrary, she made her home in the green wood, because it was his home, because he found a safety there which the law elsewhere denied him. Her brother, Allan, too, had offered her an asylum in his residence, which was situated in a sweet dale to the west of Mansfield; but kindly thanking him, she preferred sharing the couch of skins where her husband rested, to all the luxuries his mansion afforded; and so she dwelt in the bonnie Shire wood, queen of the forest, even as Robin Hood was king.

Allan, at the instigation of Robin Hood, immediately upon his marriage, had entered into negotiations with Henry II, to sell his estates in Huntingdonshire, at two-thirds of their value; at the same time making an offer to forego a part of the arrears due to him, on consideration of his

confirming his marriage with the Lady Christabel. Henry, who sought every opportunity of becoming master of the richest estates in England, availed himself of the offer with avidity, and by an especial act, confirmed the ceremony, the performance of which had been so unceremoniously taken out of the hands of the Lord Bishop of Hereford. Allan had been speedy in this affair, and Henry so eager to conclude it, that he scarce inquired into the facts of the case.

And when the Bishop arrived to lay before the king a statement of the contumely with which he had been treated, the negotiations were concluded and ratified. The only redress he obtained was a warrant and reward to apprehend the bold outlaw, Robin Hood, and the power to inflict summary punishment upon him when and wherever he might be taken. This had been already done, and the Bishop therefore returned as he went; but he resolved to endeavour to capture Robin, and proceeded to raise an addition to his armed retinue, with the intention and hope of succeeding in persuading Baron Fitz Alwine and Sir Tristram of Goldsborough to join their forces with his, and exterminate the outlaw and his band.

Allan, having concluded his sale satisfactorily, had quitted Huntingdonshire, and built a pretty dwelling in the centre of a beautiful dale, a short distance from Mansfield, and here lived happily with Christabel, obtaining the name, from his residence, of Allan of the Dale, or as it was then abbreviated, Allan-a-Dale.

Will Scarlet, in the possession of his wife, was as happy as any man could possibly be. Naturally possessing a good flow of spirits, of a sanguine temperament, and of a warm imagination, he had pictured to himself nothing could be so agreeable as a wife like Maude, and had invested her with all the charms of an angel. She knew the extent of his affection for her, and she strove hard that she should not fall much short of his high opinion of her. Will made his home in the wood because Robin had done so; and as Marian had set so noble an example, Maude could do no less than follow it, and therefore became a tenant of the forest also.

There were many maidens who followed their precedent, and were incited to this from the enjoyment they had received during the festival of Robin's wedding. Robin Hood loved the fair sex generally, from an innate predisposition towards them, and for the sake of the fair being whom he had wedded, he had inculcated this feeling among his followers, so that a female might at any time have passed alone and safely through any part of the forest peopled by his men; and if it so chanced that they encountered any of the band, they were kindly invited to partake of refreshment, which, if they did, was spread bounteously, but unostentatiously before them, and then they were escorted safely through the wood, without being offended by word or deed of those who were guides.

And when this began to be known, as soon it did, and spread far and wide, many young girls with bright eyes, and feet almost as light as their hearts, often strolled through the valleys and glades of Shirewood, and when by their firesides, were frequently heard to say that the merrie men, nathless what was reported of them, were dear creatures after all; and upon that joyous day which saw Robin the husband of the beautiful Marian, there were many of the maidens, with their sweet smiling faces, making the heart glow to gaze upon them. As they danced lightly and gladsomely, they would look into the flashing eyes and merrie features of their partners, to wonder how they could ever have had any fear of them, and then sigh and think a life in the wood, with such companions, must be vastly pleasant and very much to be desired. In the innocence of their pure hearts, they hinted such a thing, and the hint was no sooner given than taken. Those who hinted, found the tongues of those whom they esteemed to have bright eyes and merrie features, to be as persuasive as their countenances were engaging.

The resolution of Marian and Maude was opening a pleasant path for them, and no sooner did they entertain a wish to pursue it, than they were persuaded to do so. And no sooner were they persuaded than they did so. The consequence of all this was that jolly Friar Tuck found himself suddenly engaged in marrying couples from morning till night, and naturally expressed a desire, after he had been some time thus occupied, to know whether an epidemic of this peculiar character was raging, how many people it would carry off, and when and where it would stop. After reaching a certain height, it began to abate, and soon the cases were reduced to a few, and ultimately, to one now and then. But strange to say, there was no abatement in the symptoms, they continued to exist with undiminished force, and do to this day.

Merrily, most merrily, did this body of people dwell in the green wood. The cave, already spoken of, had been enlarged and improved considerably; it was divided into cells and apartments, principally employed for sleeping in – the broad glades being the hall or dining place. The inconveniences of bad weather, or the inclemencies of winter, were met in the arrangements which their extensive underground establishment enabled them to make. They made the chief object of their life to render each other as cheerful and as happy as they could, and succeeded. It can scarce be imagined how joyously and merrily they passed their days.

The men were all Saxons — many of them men who had been defrauded of birth rights and possessions, by Norman oppression — scarce one in the band but what had been a sufferer through Norman avarice or violence. They retaliated whenever it was in their power; succouring upon Normans, when opportunity served, those who were oppressed and trampled upon; feeding and clothing the poor, and levying contributions upon the rich.

There were two classes from whom the poor suffered – indeed, the public generally: The wealthy landholders, who at that time were chiefly Normans and the Church, who left no means untried or unpursued, to squeeze money from both rich and poor, to swell their already enormous revenues. It was, therefore, upon these two classes that Robin Hood commanded levies to be made for the support of the band, and for the purpose of assisting the poor; but he ordered that they should be levied in such a manner as to prevent the necessity of bloodshed. His orders in everything were implicitly obeyed.

An infringement of any strict law was punished with certain death, from which there was no escape. They were carried out to the letter.

By these observances they attained a name for forbearance and goodwill, while their abilities as archers gained them a fame which spread far and wide. Several expeditions had been made to dislodge them in vain, and at length they were suffered to dwell there – as they committed no ravages on surrounding property – unmolested by kingly interference.*

Marian found the forest life far more agreeable than she could have anticipated. Her every wish was anticipated and gratified as soon as understood. She was made, and felt herself to be, the queen of the merry people tenanting the old wood.

Proudly did she witness the warm and affectionate, yet respectful, homage which was paid to Robin Hood, who retained his hold on the hearts of his followers by his uniform kindness and cheerful friendliness to them, and preserved their respect and deference by his extraordinary abilities.

Day after day, she wandered out with him to learn all the sweet places and cool recesses which the green afforded, and to acquire a knowledge of such sports and pastimes as were then known and pursued. She was presented with a rare and choice set of hawks, and with some little tuition, could fly her hawk with the best and most practised hand.



* 'His men', says Major, 'most skillful in battle, whom four times that number of the boldest fellows durst not attack.' He further says 'I disapprove of the rapine of the man, but he was most humane and the prince of all robbers.'

Majoris Britanniae Historia , Edinburgh, 1740

*And of these archers brave, there was not any one,
But he could kill a deer his swiftest speed upon,
Which they did boil and roast in many a mighty wood,
Sharp hunger the fine sauce to their more kingly food.
Then taking them to rest, his merry men and he
Slept many a summer's night under the green wood tree*

Deatton's Polybion

But the art she strove most to accomplish to perfection, was the use of the bow. Robin, with unwearied assiduity, taught her the mysteries of acquiring an accurate aim; he would stand by her as she took her aim, would tell her when the bow arm was not straight enough, or the wrist curved sufficiently in, would raise it when too low, or depress it when too high, would teach her to fill her eye with the object at which she aimed, and bring the feather to her ear, and having obtained her aim, steadily to let the string loose without a jerk. Many other things did he teach her, which she listened to with avidity, followed closely, and obtained the reward by becoming an expert and most accurate archeress.

It was beautiful sight to see her, clothed in a tight dress of Lincoln green, stand to take an aim; her tall, graceful form, exhibited to perfection, her left arm extended, holding the bow, her right bent gracefully upwards, drawing the arrow towards her ear, her fair head turned towards the object at which she aimed, and her body half turned from it, one foot slightly advanced, and the whole form proudly erect, forming as noble a view of the human form as can be obtained in any attitude.

And when she began to attain the power of performing the niceties of the art, for which Robin was so famed, and which was the stimulant to her not to disgrace his tutoring, her fame ran through the wood, exciting still further the admiration of those who dwelled there, and looked up to her affectionately and respectfully. Time passed on, and there seemed little or no abatement of their contentment. She received frequent visits from Christabel and Allan, from the inhabitants of Barnsdale Hall, and from many who, dwelling in Nottingham, felt a desire to see so rare a thing as a quantity of fair, gentle females, dwelling happily in a wood with a band of rude foresters. To her friends Marian was the same warm, earnest, affectionate friend as ever; to strangers, the most courteous and kindest creature imaginable, and the latter never departed but they went away with warm hearts, and tongues full of her praises.

We must not omit to say that on the day of her marriage, among many whom she saw for the first time, Hal of the Keep's pretty wife, Grace, was presented to her; after kindly greetings, and while yet retaining Grace's hand in hers, with an affectionate pressure, she turned to Robin and said, a sweet smile illumining her features "Robin, when you told me, some time since, that it was not always safe to go into Nottingham, I suspect you were making some allusion to our sweet friend here. I can now well believe you that it is not quite safe, and for the future you go not there without me. My dear Grace, you will pardon me, but I must positively forbid it."

"Why, dear lady?" asked Grace, innocently.

"Why!" echoed Marian, with mirth; "Why! Why, how can you put such question with such a grave face? The temptation must be terrible — those eyes of yours would turn an angel from the paths of paradise."

"You are pleased to flatter, like a certain friend of yours," returned Grace, with her musical laugh; "but you need not fear, dear lady. Robin Hood loves you too fondly, and I my Hal too dearly, to give either you or him cause for jealousy."

"Besides, you do not doubt me," said Robin, a wicked smile lurking in the corner of his eye.

"To be sure not," said Maude, merrily; "But if I were inclined to be spiteful, I should perhaps tell how Robin once said to me, when I told him he never brought me any news?"

"What?" asked Marian, observing her hesitate.

"Something which, for the present, I think I shall keep to myself," she replied.

"Oh no!" said Marian; "I cannot allow that, Maude; let us know all his delinquencies. He has been so much petted lately, that unless we discover something against him, he will be so elevated we shall never be able to reduce him to his proper level."

"That's truth," answered Maude; "and so, Robin, you see it is my duty to tell."

"By all means," laughed he; "Wreak your vengeance at once, for I mean to make myself so amiable presently, that you won't have the heart to do it."

"There," said Marian, "You perceive I spoke nothing but truth; he is commencing to presume upon our kindness. You have no alternative, Maude. Let us hear all."

"I am afraid I must then," she responded, with affected solemnity. "Well, then, he told me that he frequently went to pay Hal a visit, much to the danger of his peace of mind, in being in the presence of his — mark the words — 'lovely little wife'!"

"Very well," interrupted Marian.

"Oh, but the worst is to come," cried Maude.

"Pray don't spare me," exclaimed Robin.

"I don't intend," replied she.

"Nor I," remarked Marian; "Pray go on, Maude."

"He said he reached there in the morning and never got away till night, Hal very often being absent, and Grace's eyes were flashing away, her sweet lips smiling, and his own heart going pit-a-pat, until he felt an affection for her and everybody bearing the name of Grace."

"You have a tenacious memory, Maude," said Robin.

"And so have I," cried Marian, "And a great deal of credibility, too. I believe all Maude said to be true and it is well I did not hear this

yesterday, or I should not have had him – that is, I think I should not. You see, dear Grace, I cannot possibly suffer him to come to Nottingham without me.”

“I shall be very happy to see you, dear lady,” said she, earnestly, and looking in Marian’s face to see if she meant what she said seriously, for both Maude and she had spoken with such an affectation of gravity, that her innocent mind could scarce detect it, and she began to think Maude was really spiteful; “But you have nothing to fear from Robin, for I am sure he loves you very much, for he has often told me so, and I – I do not remember ever making my eyes flash to my knowledge, or smiling, only when I ought to do so –”

“Oh, that was all his vanity, dear Grace,” cried Marian, with a merry laugh, which was at once changed to seriousness on finding Grace suddenly burst into tears. “My dear, dear Grace, what is this?” she cried earnestly; “We are only jesting. I shall never forgive myself for having wounded your feelings.”

“Why, Grace!” said Maude. “Grace, what an ill-natured, wicked creature you must think me, if you believe what I said was more than sport. Nay, ‘twas but mirth, a heart light – almost too light, made me say what I shall always repent having said, for it has made thee suffer pain.”

“It is past. I beg your pardon; I am very simple – I did think you were serious; but now I find it was a joke, I can smile, you shall see, as merrily as you.” And, as Grace uttered this, she lifted up her shining eyes, still glittering with tears, and smiled in such sweet manner that Marian, to hide the emotion it occasioned, embraced her warmly. After she had recovered somewhat, she turned to Robin and said, with a pouting lip but smiling eyes–

“You have been the cause of this scene, Robin; it is all your fault, and you shall pay a penalty for it.”

“With all my heart!” he cried gaily, “Name it!”

“Why, sir, that is to kiss Grace at once, as a reparation for your crime.”

“I shall obey you, Marian, with alacrity; nor would I care how often I repeated the offence, if such were always to be the penalty.”

“What would Hal say if he were here?” said Grace, blushing a deep crimson, as soon as her lips were disengaged from Robin’s.

“Why,” said Hal, coming up at the moment, “that if he was not exactly pleased with your lips he had better try your cheeks, your forehead, or eyes; and if he is not pleased with them, why, I should say he was unmistakably the most fastidious being in existence.”

“I confess to being very much pleased with the lips,” said Robin, jocularly.

“Without doubt,” said Marian, “So no more trips to Nottingham without me.”

Hal, with some surprise, inquired the cause, and Maude told him in such a merry manner, that he laughed till he cried again.

"Ah, well!" he exclaimed, when he had recovered his breath, addressing himself to Marian, "I think you may rest happy on that point; I am sure you have no cause to fear, and I am sure I have not."

"I don't question your happy certainty," said Marian, with a smile, "But I must honestly confess that, were I a man, and much in my pretty Grace's company, I should doubt considerably whether the temptation were not very much stronger than my strength of mind to resist its fascination."

"Not if you had another to love such as thee!" exclaimed Robin, fondly.

"I think so, too," said Maude, looking about for Will, who, being at a short distance, the moment he saw her turn her head towards him, ran hastily up to her.

"And so do I," said Hal, kissing his wife affectionately.

"Well then," continued Marian, extending, her hand to Robin, which he seized and pressed to his lips, "I do not think we can do better than each keep to our own."

This was a point on which they agreed unanimously, and then they went and mixed in the sports which others were pursuing, with glad hearts and nimble limbs.

A year passed away – a year of joy it was to them, for it passed and brought no alloy with it, and much, very much pleasure had it brought. It had been crowned too by the birth of three children, Allan being blessed with a girl, while Robin and Will Scarlet became fathers to two fine boys. They had a rare bout of feasting to celebrate the happy event, and Marian, who with Maude had been removed to beneath the roof of her brother, gave Robin no cause to fear by being better than could be expected. His visits to Allan-a-Dale were as frequent as it was thought prudent they should be, and he was usually dismissed, after kissing the child, with some cheerful intelligence respecting his beloved wife.

In these visits, Will Scarlet invariably accompanied him, and they journeyed home to the haunt, his spirits scarce knew bounds. He leaped and danced about with joy, to know that Maude was well and his little counterpart was better.

One day, after returning from one of these visits, he assembled the whole of his men in one of the broad glades; it was necessary; there had been many additions since he and many of his men had wedded; the laws of the forest, which he had established, had been evaded by some of the newcomers, upon the plea of ignorance; they had been pardoned upon their plea, and to do them justice, had rarely again infringed, excepting in cases where their passions led them astray, and from their ignorance of an existing law to prevent it.

To obviate this, he called them all together and recapitulated to them every law, the reason of its being framed, its adoption, the necessity for its observance, and the punishment of breaking it. He wound up by saying "Our force now exceeds any power which may be brought against us with an endeavour to oust us from our leafy home. Our wealth is such that we are enabled to do much to withdraw from us the odium of the name of outlaws, by such gentle conduct as may shame those who dwell in the protection of the law, and are in the enjoyment of all the luxuries which wealth can afford. To do this, we must, under all circumstances, abstain from unnecessary violence; give to the poor whenever it lies in our power, upon all occasions refrain from injuring ploughmen, husbandmen, or any who live by the sweat of their brow, and do the best to support their families. Were we to act otherwise, we should only be following the base practices of the vile Normans, oppressing those already too much oppressed."

"Honest yeomen, too, fulfilling their duties, molest not. All Saxons are free, gentle and simple; and even our courtesy may be extended to such Norman knights, who not being of such a grasping, avaricious nature as their brethren, have little more fortune than their sword, and who do not, by overbearing conduct, merit wholesome and seasonable chastisement; but wherever a wealthy Norman is met with within the limits of this forest, he must be made to pay handsomely for the entertainment we will give him."

"All monks, bishops, and archbishops, without reserve, shall pay richly; their infamous exactions and extortions demand it; let none escape. Respect the cloth but not the men; they have abused the faith which they should by virtue, charity, and an absence of all selfishness, have upheld; spare them not."

"But above all, forget not the High Sheriff of Nottinghamshire, my Lord Baron Fitz Alwine, he who sold his child, and but for our interference would have sent her blighted in spirit and broken-hearted to the grave; who did Will Scarlet the favour of exerting himself to the utmost to send him to the other world, on an especial high gallows, and who frequently vows he will capture all of ye, hang ye on trees in rows for the birds to peck at, and I in the middle of you. Wherever you see him catch him, but for Lady Christabel's, Allan-a-Dale's sweet wife's sake, hurt him not by violence – we shall hurt him more by making him pay richly for his release; and should you see any of his people, capture them, and he shall pay well to recover them."

"I have said! Away with ye to your respective stations. Remember the laws, the Churchmen, and the High Sheriff of Nottinghamshire!"

The merrie men gave a loud cheer and separated, laughing heartily. At the conclusion of the speech, Little John, who had listened quietly, said, when left alone with Robin and Will Scarlet.

“It appears to me, my noble master, that no man wants more or better laws than you have given us to guide him through life; everything a simple man may require to be insured a comfortable life, the consideration of the forbearance to him and himself to others, has been cared for, and means taken to punish those who violate their observance. But I am told there are roomsful all laid down and fashioned upon skins to rule by – that is, the whole country and how are we ruled? To my simple thinking, they had better only have our forest laws, and I am sure they would be all happier and honester men.”

“You speak truly,” said Robin; “Were men’s possessions limited to their wants, and the laws to their possessions, simpler laws than we exercise would be sufficient. But that is not the case, nor ever will be; the selfishness of man’s nature, the inherent craving after more than he requires, will always give rise to an infinity of laws, whose sole basis, after all, is to protect the weaker against the strong, right against might. But were we to live for a thousand years, we should perceive that, although this country will have progressed to an extent which it is impossible to imagine, yet even then oppression, exaction, and state necessities, will make requisite a number of laws far excelling in the average what they do now.”

“It does not seem natural,” returned Little John, thoughtfully.

“Nor is it according to the dictates of reason,” replied Robin; “But reason and passion are two opposite things. Were men’s passions ever subservient to their reason, we should need no laws.”

“I can believe you, for I am so sure you do everything for the best, that your word is law to me,” said Little John, earnestly. “My reason—”

“Your experience, perhaps,” remarked Robin. “And after all, there’s but little difference. We reason most frequently by experience, because that has taught us what is —”

“Hark!” cried Little John, “I hear a horse’s footstep clattering down yon glade. Will Scarlet, come with me, and we will see who it is.”

“You know your instructions,” observed Robin, as they prepared to depart.

“Well.” was the reply.

“It is good. If it is some wealthy Norman or Churchman, invite him to dinner, and bring him forthwith, for my appetite tells me it is near the hour we take our meal.”

With an assenting nod of the head they quitted him, and glided through a thicket in the direction of the footsteps, and soon obtained a view of the stranger.

"By the Mass! What a miserable-looking dog," remarked Will, with a slight laugh. "I should think there was little wealth about him."

"He does look wretched and woe-begone, I confess," replied Little John; "But he may only affect that, and, under the appearance of misery, think to pass through the forest scatheless. If he is bent upon deceiving, he will be himself deceived."

The stranger did look wretched. It is true he was habited as a knight, but his garments were hanging carelessly about him, as if much grief had made him reckless of appearance. A hood, attached to the gown he wore, was thrown over his head, which rested thoughtfully and heavily upon his chest; he had given the rein to his horse, and only one of his feet were in the stirrups, the other swung listlessly by his side, taking its motion from the horse's movements.

He looked the embodiment of care and misery. He was absorbed in a deep reverie, from which he was aroused by the sudden stopping of his steed, and hearing the full-toned voice of Little John exclaim – "Good morrow, sir stranger! – a goodly greeting to thee; thou'rt right welcome to the green wood – thou hast been expected."

"I? expected?" echoed the stranger, fixing his full melancholy eyes upon Little John.

"Yes," cried Will Scarlet, "Our master has been looking for thee, waiting dinner for thee these three hours."

"Waiting for me? Impossible!" urged the stranger, thoughtfully.

"Indeed has he," said Little John; "He knew thou wert coming."

"It is not even probable," replied the stranger, regarding both Little John and Will Scarlet with a perplexed look.

"It is true, nevertheless," cried Will.

"And who is thy master," asked the stranger, "who knows of my coming, and extends his courtesy to me thus."

"Robin Hood," answered Little John, meekly.

"What! The celebrated forester of that name?" inquired the stranger with an air of interest.

"Even he," was the reply.

"I have heard of him many a time and oft, always to admire his noble conduct. He hath done much and hath done nobly. I am glad I shall have the opportunity of meeting with him; he is a good yeoman and true. I accept his invitation, though I can not guess how he could have expected me."

"That thou shalt know anon," replied Little John.

"Be it as thou wilt, stout forester. Lead on – I will follow thee."

Little John took the horse by the bridle and led him forward, Will Scarlet bringing up the rear; and they pursued their way to the trysting tree – Little John not having a doubt but what this appearance of sorrow and poverty was a cloak to hide wealth, while Will Scarlet thought him a poor devil, of whom the only good to be obtained by carrying him before Robin Hood was the satisfaction of seeing him eat a good dinner.

They were soon beneath the trysting tree, at whose foot sat Robin. When the stranger reached him and alighted, he rose to welcome him, and was struck with his dreary *semblaunt* [Middle English, 'appearance']. At the same time, he could not but notice the knightly air of gentility which pervaded every act, and he came to the same conclusion which Little John had already arrived at, that of believing this appearance of sadness was assumed in order to save his money. Robin did not appear to notice it, but greeted him warmly, cheerfully, and kindly, and their converse was of a like nature. Robin led

him to a seat, and some clear, cool water from a spring was brought him to wash himself from the effects of his travel, while his horse was given to the charge of one of the band to rub down and feed.

When both the stranger and Robin had washed, a savoury dinner was spread before them. There was every dainty laid out which the season or circumstances of the time would allow, as the old ballad tells us –

*Of bread and wine they had enough,
And nombles of the deere;
Swans and pheasants they had full good,
And fowls of the rivere;
There fail'd never so little bird
That ever was bred on brere.*

Robin kept up the name of his good hospitality, and if sorrow is hungry as well as dry, then was the stranger most sorrowful, for he partook of as hearty a meal as a fellow with a fine natural appetite sharpened with a twenty-four hours' fast could well consume. He washed down his meal with draughts of wine, which betokened that either the wine was marvelously good, or else sorrow was very dry.

And the fasted were feasted, the remains were cleared and Robin and his guest laid themselves down in the cool shades of the tall trees, and talked with free and open heart. There was something in the knight's opinions of men and things which gave Robin a favourable opinion of him, and, notwithstanding his sorry attire, he could not believe but he was wealthy. Now, of all things, Robin Hood abhorred deceit; naturally open

and frank to the echo himself, he disliked to see the reverse in other people, and paid what he considered its value to the person who incurred the debt.

Therefore, nathless the good opinion he had formed of the knight, he resolved he should, were it only for the mean deceit he believed him to be practising, pay handsomely for his entertainment. An opportunity soon occurred for putting his intention into practice, for, after referring to the small amount of gratitude shown by man to man, the stranger said—

“Great as my disgust is at such ignoble practices, it is too common a matter to excite surprise, but I trust I shall never be guilty of it. I thank thee, most hearty, Robin Hood, for the manner in which you have this day treated me, and should you ever pass near St. Mary’s Abbey, at Lee Castle you will find a warm reception.”

“Probably,” replied Robin, drily, looking earnestly at him, and yet seeing nothing to guarantee a suspicion of his faith and frankness. “But, sir knight, those who feast with me in the green wood, are never troubled by me with a visit in return. To those to whom a dinner is a charity, I give a share of what I have with goodwill, and think no more on’t. But to those who are wealthy, and can pay for their entertainment, my treatment is different. I would not insult their pride by giving them a dinner; and so serving them up the best I have, I make them pay for what they have had, even as they would were they in a town – in truth, I lead them to consider this wood but as a hostel, myself the innkeeper, my merrie men the waiters, and they the noble guests who have to pay liberally for what they receive.”

The knight laughed. “It is a singular view of the case, and an ingenious way of levying contributions, I confess,” said he. “I have heard much of thy courtesy to those whom thou hast relieved of their superfluous wealth, but never before had an illustration of it.”

“Indeed,” said Robin; “Well, to make the illustration more perfect, you shall experience it,” and blowing one blast of his horn, he was immediately attended by Little John and Will Scarlet. “Now, sir knight,” he resumed, “The entertainment being concluded, you will perhaps be kind enough to pay for thine entertainment. These are my cashiers, and will take the money.”

“As you consider the forest a hostel, you charge according to its size?” questioned the knight, composedly.

“Exactly,” returned Robin.

“And do you treat every one alike – knight, baron, and peer?” he demanded.

“Assuredly I do,” replied Robin Hood. “You would not have a yeoman treat a belted knight, an earl, duke, or prince, to a dinner? It would be quite foreign to good manners.”

"Very true, my good yeoman; but in truth you will find me but a poverty-stricken guest, even though a belted knight. I have but ten merks upon my person, and that is all my store."

"I can scarce credit it."

"It looks not like truth, and yet it is such. Nay, I shall not be offended, let thy followers search me."

Little John, who rather discredited his statement, did it at once, and found no more than the knight had stated.

"The knight has spoken truly," he said; "Here are but ten merks."

"It is my whole worldly wealth," repeated the knight.

"Then much do I fear me thou hast been too speedy of ridding thyself of thy inheritance, or it must have been a sorry one for such a noble knight as thee," said Robin.

"My inheritance was a noble one," returned the knight; "A right noble patrimony, which I have not wasted, nor squandered, poor as ye see me. Never in my living, or in my gifts and dispensations, have exceeded my income, but ever lived within it."

"You speak in parables!" exclaimed Robin. "If ye have lived frugally with a noble patrimony, how is it thou art thus poor? Beshrew me, for a knight with a noble inheritance, ten merks to travel with is but a poor sum, and looks marvellously like the effects of squandering and dissipation."

"It seemeth what it is not, and to unravel this seeming contradiction is to tell thee a sad story."

"Let me hear it, sir knight; if thou hast been grievously wronged, it may be in my power to right thee."

"I have heard thou dost extend thy aid ever to the wronged, and when thou hast heard my story, I have little doubt that at least I shall have thy sympathy."

"I seldom deny that where occasion demands it. Proceed."

"My name is Richard, my family is descended King Ethelstein."

"Thou'rt a Saxon?" interrogated Robin, interrupting him.

"Even so, and being one has been the principal cause of my misfortune."

"I am glad thou'rt a Saxon! Continue thy tale."

"Men call me Sir Richard of the Lee, my castle being situated in an extensive lee, two miles north of St. Mary's Abbey. When young, I married one whom I had loved from childhood. Our union was blessed with an offspring, a fine boy, who grew up a proud, noble youth, whose form excelled in masculine proportions, and whose face, the counterpart of his mother's, was the incarnation of manly beauty. As he grew up, each day developed some new beauty of person or of spirit. Never did parents so love a child as we loved him, and never did child so deserve a parents' love as did he."

“The history of boyhood, Robin, is the same in all men. It is true, the detail may vary, but there is a governing principle by which, at that age, our actions are influenced and pervaded – it is what is called love. He who possesses the kindly attributes of human nature, has this passion grafted in him more strongly than any other; and it evinces itself in all his deeds, his thoughts, and inclinings. It is the most beautiful attribute of human nature. I think meanly of his spirit who has never possessed it, or acknowledged himself to possess it. My boy was an enthusiast.”

“Dwelling so near St. Mary’s Abbey, my confessor being, too, one of the order, I frequently visited there. A lay brother, one day, while there, drew me on one side. He told me he had been a yeoman. He had married a young and beautiful girl, whom he had loved with a passion amounting to intensity: She had died, and left him so broken hearted, so crushed in spirit, that life had become a burden. He had, therefore, withdrawn himself from the world, and purposed, so soon as his probation had expired, to devote the remainder of his days to God with the most rigid devotion.”

“But he had a child, a little girl, and he begged of me, knowing my nature, as he said, and having lived on my estate, he knew of no one in the world to whom he could confide her with such a contented mind, and begged of me to take her. Struck by the man’s earnestness, by the wretched, misery-stricken expression of his features, I consented. Thanking me warmly, he went and brought the child from the refectory to me. I never remember to have seen anything which made such an impression upon me as my first view of that dear child.”

“She was tall and gracefully slim, like the slightest fawn, which, in its lightness, scarce impresses the tender grass on which it rests. Her hair, which was light and long, fell in a profusion of rich clustering ringlets adown her long neck, resting upon her small shoulders. She fixed her large melancholy blue eyes upon me with such an expression of sweetness, that I instantly felt a sensation of gladness pass through me, in having consented to adopt this beautiful child. Her father noticed the admiration my countenance expressed, and said to me – ‘Thou seest I have cause to be anxious for the welfare of this tender child.’ ”

“Indeed, thou hast,” I replied. “I have never witnessed such a thing of beauty.”

““She bears so close a resemblance to her mother that every look she gives me rends my soul with agony, for it ever brings to my memory the bitterness of my loss. Take her, Sir Richard, cherish her kindly, for she has a gentle spirit, and a harsh look or word pains her young heart terribly. You will bring her to see me at times, and my heart will gladden when I think that she will have a friend who will supply the place of a parent when I am sleeping beneath these cold stones.””

"I will be a father to her," I exclaimed earnestly, "such a one as you could most fondly desire, or the Holy Mother withdraw her grace from me."

"The monk was energetic in his thanks, and on parting embraced his child passionately. She wept bitterly, and clung to him as though it would break her heart to be separated, but a few words from him, telling her that it would make him happy by her a quitting him to live with me, appeased her grief."

"At least the little thing strove hard to suppress it on learning that it made him unhappy to see her cry, and she tried to smile and quit him with a cheerful countenance. All the while her little heart was bursting with sorrow, and when we had quitted the convent, and I had placed her before me upon my horse, she leaned her head upon my bosom weeping and sobbing most bitterly. I strove to appease her, and by the time we had reached home, with kind words I had succeeded in soothing her considerably. For a few days she pined and fretted, and would withdraw herself from all to wander up and down the castle alone. Our boy, Herbert, however, soon proved an effectual consoler. They were ever together, from the time they rose in the morning until they laid down wearied at eve to slumber, and dream of such sweet things as only pure and innocent minds are capable of. As they grew up from infancy, from children to boy and girlhood, we saw the change which had come over them. We could easily see, that in the world there was no object whom Herbert loved so tenderly as Lilas, and that she would rather die than lose his love. We could see with what fervour, with what full deep passionate ardour, each gazed upon the other. We heard with emotion the trembling tone of their rich voices, as each might speak some kind thing of the other. We knew they loved each other with a pure devotion, which nothing could surpass, or scarce equal; and I said to my dear wife:"

"These young hearts have never known sorrow; there is no need they should while we can prevent it. To Herbert the earth owns no equivalent to Lilas, with Lilas that feeling is reciprocal, and if we should part them we can make no compensation for the agony they must endure. What is it in our brief life, to you or I, dear Godreda,' I continued, 'that Lilas is but the daughter of a Saxon yeoman? He is a Saxon, and that is in his favour; but what if he be a yeoman, he was honest, and is now a rigid devotee. We know his child, whom, God knows, I love as if she wert my own. We know that she is gentle and good, and is, in all things, all we could wish her, and will make our boy happy, for she will be faithful and affectionate; and so, dear Godreda, what say ye? Shall we not unite their hands as they are already united in hearts?"

“My kind wife smiled, and laid her hand upon mine affectionately, and said I had anticipated her, and that the sweet children’s happiness superseded every other consideration; and so we betrothed them. In the course of time her father died, and then she was left to my sole care. The time we had arranged that should see them wedded drew near, when a Norman knight, who had a small estate in Lancashire, paid a visit to the Abbot of St. Mary’s, a near relative. As well as I can conjecture, the Norman felt a desire to possess my estates; and learning from the abbot that I had a young and lovely female under my guardianship, to whom, when married, it was expected that I should give a large portion of my property, he had the insolence to ride over from the abbey, demand an interview, which was readily granted, and, upon the pretence of viewing the castle, he gained admittance to our family circle.”

“The sight of Lilas inflamed him, and, I believe, my pleasant estates much more, if I may judge by the terms in which he eulogised it. He wound up his praises by making Lilas an ostentatious offer of his hand. It was, however, without hesitation, firmly but respectfully declined.”

“He, nothing abashed, renewed the offer with insulting terms, presuming upon some interest he held at court, but this time he was peremptorily rejected, and an intimation given him that his presence was irksome, and would be looked upon as an unwarrantable intrusion. He paid another visit. He left the castle in a towering rage, vowing vengeance in horrible terms. We laughed at his threats, but soon learned they were not to be lightly treated. One morning a boy, the son of a serf upon my estate, came in tremendous heat to tell us that the Norman had carried off Lilas by force. He said he encountered him and a squire about four miles from the castle; they had stopped in consequence of some disarrangement in the horse’s gear, and had called upon him to assist them.”

“He knew Lilas at once, and guessed something was wrong by seeing her weeping bitterly, and wringing her hands in the greatest anguish. He contrived to fix a pebble in the forefoot of the horse which the Norman rode, and then nearly to sever the girth of the saddle without being discovered. He then dashed off, pretending to hear the note of a horn summoning him, and never stopped until he arrived at the castle. Herbert was stunned by the intelligence. She had not been missed – she frequently wandered about the grounds alone, while Herbert was engaged in exercising manly sports, and her absence was not therefore noticed.

Herbert saddled his favourite steed, was astride, and off in pursuit in an incredibly short space of time. The acts of the boy had been of good service. The girth of the saddle gave way, and when that was remedied, the horse fell dead lame. The Norman swore tremendously, for their progress was miserably slow. He gored the poor steed with his spurs until he reared, and nearly threw both him and Lilas.

Suddenly he heard the furious clattering of a horse's feet behind him – he turned and beheld my gallant boy flying along in pursuit. The squire drew across the road to intercept his progress; but his arm, nerved by fury, was doubly strong; he clove the poor wretch at one blow to the saddle, and then dashed at the Norman, who dismounted and prepared to meet his attack. My noble boy flung himself from his reeking steed and dashed at him.”

“The contest was a short one; my boy slew him, and brought home the gentle Lilas in his arms.”

“A short time afterwards the death of the Norman became known, also by whom he was slain, and a party of soldiers were sent to capture my boy, and he was to suffer death. I appealed to King Henry. I used every means to save him I could. I laid a full statement of the facts before him, and appealed to him to deal me – as equally a subject with the Norman – strict justice; but such a number of Normans had been slain by Saxons, that he was resolved to make an example, and the only mitigation I could obtain was a free pardon for my son upon the consideration of a payment by me of an enormous sum. Glad to obtain my boy's life upon any terms, I consented to pay it.”

“I soon sacked my coffers. I called my tenants together. I stated the case, and craved their assistance, and it wrung my heart to see how freely they brought out their little horde and placed it at my disposal. I was still short of the sum by a considerable amount. I sold my plate, everything available, and when that was done I was four hundred golden merks short.

The Abbot of St. Mary's, hearing of my emergency, came under the semblance of friendship to me – God help me! I little thought what a bitter enemy he would prove – and offered to lend me the sum upon mortgage. He expressed commiseration at my situation; he blamed the cause of all this, his relative, the Norman; and said my son was justified in his conduct, and regretted I had not used his influence at court when I appealed to Henry. I have found since he was my most implacable foe there.”

“He offered to lend me the four hundred golden merks upon the following terms: That I was to yield him the revenues of my estates for the first year, and he was to hold the estates in mortgage, which I was to



forfeit if I did not, upon the day twelvemonth, repay him the four hundred merks, and the whole of my year's receipts. In a frantic moment I agreed, over-joyed to get the money anywhere, and now the day of payment falls upon a short time from this, and those ten merks are all I have in the world towards the sum."

"Will not the abbot grant you time!" enquired Robin.

"Not an hour – not a minute," replied the knight, mournfully. "If every fraction of the money is not paid to the time, the whole of my estates become his, and I, with my beloved wife, Herbert, and Lilas, will be thrust forth from our once happy home to starve. For myself I care not, but for those whom I have loved and honoured, whose happiness was my chiefest delight, they who have never until now known aught of misery but by name, must now drain it to the dregs. I have sought help of all I thought could help me; I have prayed for it, I have begged of it of those who once would have licked the dust from my feet, but they have turned from me, all – all. Even those whom I have befriended and benefitted have grown cold as stone, and refused me assistance. My doom is fixed. I am a beggar, and have no friend to help me – no, not one."

The knight, as he uttered these last words, in a tone quivering and instinct with misery, buried his face in his hands, and the big tears came trickling through his fingers. Will Scarlet dashed the large drops from his cheeks, and Little John began to think the sun had greater power than usual, or why did his eyes water thus? Robin Hood, after making several essays to clear his throat, said to Little John, in a husky voice –

"Some wine – some wine, my throat is parched." He took a draught, and then resumed – "By our Lady, Sir Richard of the Lee, thy story is a sad one. It makes me almost as sorrowful as thee. Hast thou no friend who would be security for the money?"

"Not one," replied the knight, raising his head. "It is hard for Saxons to find friends among the wealthy."

"Nay! we often meet a friend, aye, and a true one, when we least expect it," observed Robin, in a cheering voice. "Such may be thy case."

"No," returned Sir Richard, shaking his head sorrowfully,

"I have no friends but the saints."

"I am afraid, then," said Robin, with a smile, "Thy friends are all of a sort. To my thinking the saints are but very so – so sort of friends. Were a man to stick in a mire, I fancy he would have a very long time to stay there if he waited until they helped him out."

"Had I but time, I can repay the money, but have no security to offer but a vow by the Holy Virgin."

"Then, for the love I bear the Holy Mother of God, our dear Lady, who has never deserted me in any strait, thou shalt have it. And if thou dost, sir knight, but reverence, honour, and worship her as I do, search the world through, I would wish no better security than thy simple vow."

“And I will repay thee truly, as I do honour and adore the blessed Virgin, even with the same extent as thou, so fail she me in my hour of strait if I prove false,”

“Enough! Little John, you know where the gold is, fetch hither four hundred golden merks, forest counting. You, Will Scarlet, accompany him, you will there find my store of clothes, measure him out suits of cloth –”

“Hold!” cried Sir Richard of the Lee, “What is all this I do not comprehend, your bounty is.”

“Nay, interrupt me not; ours is an agreement ratified by Our Lady, and thou art a special messenger in Her service. We must do thee all honour. You must excuse me; thy emergency has made thee part with everything, and we would not have thee appear before the grasping abbot in this miserable plight. Therefore, Will, measure out three forest yards of each cloth, place new gear upon the grey steed the Bishop of Hereford left behind a twelve month since, and add anything else thy thoughtfulness may deem necessary. Away, and be as speedy as may be!”

Little John and Will needed no urging; they were soon at the haunt and fulfilling their tasks.

“Here,” cried Little John, “Your hands are more nimble than mine, Will. You count the money and I will measure the cloth. My bow will do for an ell wand.”

“Ho, ho!” laughed Will, “Rather a long one, though!”

“Never mind, we must not consider that in this case,” returned Little John, proceeding to measure, instead of counting the money. Will watched him for a short time, and then burst out into a hearty laugh, indulging in it till his eyes watered and his sides ached.

“By the Holy Mother! By the might of the Holy Mary” he cried, “but I should like thee to measure me out land. Why, man, thou art with a bow, which thou call’st an ell wand, and which, at least, is one and a half, measuring out yards, and skipping three foot in every three yards. Ha! ha! ha! By St. Peter! you can afford to give good measure, for it cost little, and is none of thine.”

“Do thou be quick and count the money, Will. I know what Robin means by forest measure, as well as thou shouldst to know what forest counting imports. Were he here he would give better measure than I do.”

The money was counted – the cloth measured – the grey steed saddled – and everything which could be of any present service to Sir Richard, was placed upon his back, and then they returned to the spot where they had left Robin and the knight. Robin smiled when he saw the profuse liberality which Little John and Will had exercised, and his heart warmed towards them the more for the kindly feeling which prompted it. Will placed the money in his hands.

It was in packages. "Here are one hundred golden merks in each package," he said.

Robin placed them in the knight's hands.

"Here are five packages!" he exclaimed.

"Tush, man!" answered Robin, "the water has not left thine eyes yet; thy vision is imperfect and even were there five, we have our own method of counting in this forest, whether we give or take. Put it in thy pouch, and say no more about it."

"When shall my day of payment be?" asked the knight.

"This day twelvemonth, if it will suit thee," returned Robin; "an I live, and nought contrar happens, I will be beneath this oak tree; and if thou seekest me, here shalt thou find me."

"And here will I be, if on earth I be," replied Sir Richard of the Lee, grasping Robin Hood's hand with the greatest fervour and enthusiasm. Much as I have heard of thee, Robin Hood, and I have heard much of thee, for I have dwelled from boyhood close to the spot where all thy actions have transpired, I have never heard enough to make me form the opinion of thee I shall ever entertain from this moment."

"Entertain what opinion you please, Sir Richard, but favour me by saying nought of it to me. Thou'rt a Saxon, and, therefore, in accordance with the line I have marked out for myself to pursue, hast a right to mine aid. Thou art distressed, and there also hast thou a claim upon me. I am what men call an outlaw and a robber – be it so – but I was made one from endeavouring to repay in full an unjust act. If I take from the rich I do no more than the highest and wealthiest in the land – not so bad, for I take not from the poor, they do. I give to the poor, which they do not. I commit no uncalled for violence; I sanction no act of bloodshed. I love my country and my countrymen, and hate the Norman race, for they are usurpers here, and oppressors with their usurpation. This is the main spring of my actions, and in my act to you today I do no more than I have done, and shall continue to do."

"To me you have acted nobly, generously, as a true friend. Although I knew ye not until today, yet by your conduct have you done more for me than those who have for years called themselves my true friends, who turned coldly from me in my hour of need, that a stranger might afford that succour which their narrowness of heart denied."

"May God bless you, Robin, here and hereafter! For you have made my heart glad, and those who are now at my castle pining, will on my return offer up prayers with tearful eyes for thy future welfare. At all times, in all places, I shall be proud to boast of my friendship for and with you, and devoutly I pray God the time will come when you shall find my good feelings like unto yours, consist of deeds, not words. Farewell, my true friend. This day twelvemonth I will be here."

"Farewell," replied Robin, shaking the proffered hand warmly. "Should any circumstances ever occasion me to ask thy aid, I will call upon thee for it without reserve."

"Should such a time arrive, my earnest desire to grant it will outstrip your freedom in asking. Farewell. God keep you."

"The Holy Mother keep thee," returned Robin.

With a glowing heart, streaming eyes, and waving his hand, Richard of the Lee mounted upon the grey horse, and leading his own as a sumpter horse, loaded with Robin's gifts, he took his way down the long green glades, and was soon lost among the thickly spreading trees.

"There goes a glad heart," said Little John, replacing his bonnet on his head, after having waved it as Sir Richard departed; "You have made his heart right glad, I trow."

"I think and hope so," ejaculated Robin, gazing after Sir Richard.

"I am sure so," cried Will Scarlet, rubbing his hands with great enjoyment.



Chapter 2

*The oak,
Expanding its immeasurable arms,
Embraces the light beech: the pyramids
Of the tall cedar over-arching, frame
Most solemn domes within; and far below,
Like clouds suspended in an emerald sky,
The ash and the acacia floating hang,
Tremulous and pale.*

* * *

*The woven leaves
Make net-work of the dark blue light of day,
And the night's noontide clearness, mutable
As shapes in the weird clouds; soft mossy lawns
Beneath these canopies extend their swells,
Fragrant with perfumed herbs and eyed with blooms
— Minute yet beautiful.*

* * *

*Through the dell
Silence and twilight here, twin sisters, keep
Their noonday watch, and sail among the shades
Like vaporous shapes half seen.*

----- Alastor-Shelley

*'Come, kill a venison then,' said Robin Hood,
'Come, kill me a good fat deer;
The Bishop of Hereford is to dine with me today,
And he shall pay well for his cheer.'
Robin Hood took the bishop by the hand,
And caused the music to play
He made the bishop dance in his boots,
And glad he could so get away.*

----- Robin Hood Ballad

About a month or six weeks subsequent to the event just related, the speedy restoration to convalescence of both Marian and Maude enabled them to remove, upon a visit, to Barnsdale Hall, until they should be strong enough to resume their previous mode of life by returning to dwell in the green wood. Robin Hood, who wished always to be as near his beloved Marian as circumstances would permit, took a portion of his band with him, and with some little labour soon made a haunt in Barnsdale wood, almost as comfortable as the one he had left behind him in Sherwood.

Will Scarlet vowed it was quite — at least, what it wanted in actual comfort was made up by its pleasant and convenient proximity to Barnsdale Hall, where stayed his dear little wife. There were also two other persons who were glad of the change, influenced by reasons similar to those affecting Robin and Will. These persons were Little John and Much Cockle, the miller's son (who by-the-bye, upon all occasions preferred dropping his surname, and being called by his nickname of Much, his Christian name being really Midge). These two worthies, as we have said, had also their private reason for receiving a satisfaction at the change, and were not long in exhibiting proofs to that effect.

It somehow occurred frequently, after the change had been made, that when Little John's services were required by Robin Hood, he was missing. And when Much was called to seek him out, it was discovered that he was also absent. This occurred frequently enough to induce Robin Hood to inquire the cause, and it appeared that Winifred Gamwell possessed a very great desire to ramble through the wood.

Now, as she was naturally of a very timid disposition, she was afraid to wander alone, and she had therefore taken the opportunity of her cousin, Little John, being at hand, to accept his services in showing her the beauties of Barnsdale wood. Her sister Barbara, also possessing a curiosity as great as her own, possessing also the same timidity of character, availed herself of the escort to gratify her desire to see all the pretty recesses in the old forest.

But Little John, thinking with great wisdom and most commendable prudence, that one female was quite enough at a time to take charge of, very gladly accepted of the kind, and disinterested offer which Much made, to take Barbara off his hands, and show her whatever was worthy of sight in the long, green glades, in the alleys, coverts, and recesses, the curiously twisted trunks and gnarled arms of the enormous oaks, the tall, slim, graceful stems and branches of the beech, the widely spreading elm, the dark larch, and tall pine, the wild but many hued plants and flowers and grasses, which adorned and studded the extensive forest of Barnsdale.

All these he proffered to show her, and to point out the wood ever anon with their *profuse strains of unpremeditated art* and to exhibit proofs of his skill with the bow, and perhaps with his tongue — but that he said nothing about, whatever he might have purposed. His offer was cheerfully taken, and produced the highest satisfaction in all the parties concerned. Among the trees, through the shadowy places and secluded spots, they wandered; but by some strange forgetfulness, there was little said about the forest things. They found quite enough to talk about without referring to them, and by some still stranger fatality, they always by accident took different paths, and never met again until they were near the Hall.

They would laugh when they joined company, and each accuse the other of separating purposely, and each stoutly denied the impeachment. And when they returned home, there were plenty of questions asked them whether they had enjoyed their walk, and a speculation that they must have done so under the circumstances, and all pleasant things said which might raise a smile, unallied to any pain, albeit there were many blushes accompanying their smiles.

One evening a clear, calm, warm evening, a little party left Barnsdale Hall for a quiet walk: the party consisted of Marian and Maude, who were venturing, for the first time since their interesting illness, to wander in the evening air, leaning upon the arms of their respective husbands; Winifred and Barbara Gamwell, and, of course, Little John and Much. They had strolled some distance, indulging in pleasant converse, when Marian observed –

“There is something in the look of the tall trees, the green leaves, and the fragrant scent of the sweet flowers, which is born by the soft wind playing on my face, that makes me long to be again dwelling in the midst of them.”

“It is such very pleasant living, this passing your days in a forest?” inquired Barbara.

“You may judge of it by my desire to return to it,” replied Marian.

“I should think it must be very pleasant too, for if Sherwood surpasses this wood, as Much says it does, it must be very delightful indeed and very well worth living in.”

“And you think this wood very pleasant?” asked Robin, affecting an air of casual inquiry.

“Oh! I hardly know. There are so many charming places. But there is one place which I saw, that I think surpasses all the rest and I am sure that there is nothing in Sherwood that can excel it.”

“Ay?” said Robin, pretending surprise; “That must be a pretty place, indeed, for I can assure you that Sherwood abounds in dells and glades of surpassing beauty.”

“Oh, yes! I have no doubt of it, but nothing better than this, I know. It is a kind of small dell, formed by sloping ground on all sides, the topmost rises being studded with trees of all descriptions making a variety of shades of green, perfectly marvelous. And the grass which covers the ground is so beautifully even, that it looks like a large green mantle spread all over, without a wrinkle on its surface. And then there is such a quantity of flowers all among the trees, and down by the bottom of the dell, that it is enough to enchant anyone; and such a quietness is there, broken only by the melody of the birds, the rustling of leaves, or the rippling of that little clear cool sparkling strip of water, as it gushes out

from a bed of flowers, and winds its way to other places. I never was in such a beautiful place before and never passed such delightful moments as I did in that sweet place."

"Why, Barbara, where is this? I never saw it," exclaimed Winifred, innocently.

"Oh, ho!" cried Robin, quickly, "Were you not together?"

"No," said Winifred, "Not then that is, we missed each other, we always, that is, very often, sometimes, I mean, we used in the crooked paths to get separated by accident. It was quite by accident, I can assure you."

"To be sure it was – no one doubts it, therefore neither you nor Barbara need blush to that scarlet extent," said Robin, laughing to see the sudden confusion into which the two sisters were thrown, "You see, neither Little John nor Much are blushing, therefore why should you? What do you say, Much – you separated, quite by accident, of course?"

"Oh, yes," replied Much; "and finding Barbara was pleased with quiet and pleasant spots, I led her to the little dell she speaks of. I discovered it in hunting down a deer which I had struck with an arrow."

"You must have pointed out its delights very clearly, or Barbara, unoccupied by other thoughts, must have had a quick eye for its numerous beauties, to enable her to give me such a glowing description of its charms. Pray, Barbara, was there not something more charming still, something which you have left untold?"

"Something more charming still!" echoed Barbara. Quite aware of Robin's meaning, but assuming perfect unconsciousness; "What do you mean?"

"Do you not think so, Much, eh? Was there not something more charming still in this pretty spot, which Barbara has left undescribed?" asked Robin, bending a look upon Much which made him turn his eyes every way to avoid meeting it.

"Barbara was there," replied he, working his fingers about and essaying a smile, which was rather a failure.

"So she told me," returned Robin, "With many thanks for your information, but perhaps you can tell me whether two young persons, a youth and maiden, ever sought this place, no mortal near, save themselves. And whether, when they had talked of the green-leaved trees, of the fair gentle flowers, of the little piece of murmuring water, of the birds, of the skies, and whatever else which could give quiet joy to gaze upon, they seated themselves upon the grass by that same little stream, and then, whether the youth looked into the soft eyes of the maiden, until her lids gradually covered them, and her looks were turned upon the little flower he had given her, which she was busily engaged in destroying, without being conscious that her long, trembling fingers held a blossom or aught beside in their tender grasp."

“And after a short, but a thought-thronging silence, a few words faint and low, and yet rich in tone, were breathed by the youth, and if the maiden raised her eyes to answer in a monosyllable, and drop them again, and then, whether the youth forced his hand out timidly and fearfully to take the maiden’s, and whether the instant he touched the tip of her fingers, he did not feel a thrill, like an electrical shock, rush up his arm, and take possession of his elbow, while a sensation of pleasing pain pervaded his heart, his chest, and throat, and whether there was not a surprise, greater than this sensation, to find the fingers not with-drawn.”

“When this endearing little fact was discovered – as like lightning it would be – whether he did not grow bolder, and obtained the whole of the small hand in his own, and feel the pressure which he gave returned as slightly as the impression the footstep of a butterfly makes upon the thin leaf of a delicate blossom – yet it was a pressure, slight as was its nature, and sufficient to tell the youth, whose heart was beating audibly, that his presumption was not offensive.”

“And then, possibly, you may remember, whether that youth, holding the maiden’s right hand in his insinuated his left round the slim waist, so invitingly near, and so conveniently situated for a resting place, and whether she noticed the act more than by feeling a quicker but more pleasant pulsation, and a strange determined obstinate tendency in her right shoulder to find a leaning place, and none being near but his beating bosom, and how she found that better than none at all.”

“And how all these little things again produced a quivering silence, which at last was broken by a few sighs from hearts overflowing with deep joy, and then came there not a quantity of impassioned but low-toned words from the youth, informing the maiden that the wide earth held nothing which by any comparison could ever be one fraction so dear to him as was she, that he would every much rather be the victim of the most dismal fate than lose her love, that in fact, he said everything he could say, and much more than he was conscious of saying – and the maiden believed him, telling him so by dropping her head upon his shoulder, and weeping as if some dire calamity had occurred, or her heart was fit to break.”

“And when all this had subsided, they perhaps left the little dell, and perhaps the maiden might meet with her sister by accident, and she might have been similarly engaged – there is no knowing – and then they might get safe home after all, and if a hint relative to what had transpired might be dropped, they might express the greatest surprise, and wonder what it could mean. Pray can you tell me, Barbara, whether two young persons ever did this?”

“It is an impertinent question, dear Barbara,” said Marian, “and were I you, I would not answer it.”

"Perhaps you will do as much, Much," laughed Robin, "Or have *you* done as much?"

"You ask strange questions," replied Much, with an embarrassed air, and attributing some of the power of a conjuror to Robin, in describing so accurately a scene which had really occurred between him and Barbara, and for the moment his mind misgave him that she had told it perhaps to Marian, and the latter to Robin. He looked at Barbara, but her face was of such a brilliant red, that he at once dropped the surmise, and from something of an angry expression which the young damsel tintured a glance she favored him with, the thought struck him she might imagine he had told Robin. This thought perplexed him, and added to his embarrassment, from which he was not at all relieved, upon hearing Will Scarlet exclaim –

"By my faith! Much, it looks very like truth what Robin says, for you look very strange about the eyes and mouth, and stammer and stutter as if you had to talk pleasantly to a bishop or the High Sheriff of Nottingham. And as for my sister Barby there, she looks as if her skin were made of scarlet cloth."

"Now it is not so very hot tonight that in a slow walk the heat should put such a colour into your features, therefore it must be something else; and I think that it must be as Robin says. By the Mass! Barby, but if I am called Will Scarlet, for you ought to be called Barby Scarlet, for your red face, Eh Maude don't you think so?"

"I should like to pull your red hair well, Master Will," said Barbara, in somewhat of a vexed tone.

"And so you might, Barby, if it was on anyone else's head, but while it is on mine, I have an objection," returned Will, with a laugh.

"And so you will not tell me," said Robin, "whether you know of two persons who have acted as I have described?"

"If you have any desire to know, I will try and find, out for you," offered Little John, innocently, "Only I can't understand what can be your motive."

"You must not do any such thing," whispered Winifred, pulling his arm.

"Perhaps it was you and some young lady?" cried Will Scarlet, with a loud laugh.

"Oh, no," replied Little John, "that is not very likely. In truth, while Robin spoke, I laughed to myself, and thought it was not possible for any two persons to act so – I won't exactly say – foolishly."

"No, you had better not," said Maude, with a smile.

"No, not perhaps foolishly, but oddly," concluded Little John, quite satisfied he had taken the proper view of case.

"Ah!" cried Will, "You know nothing about it, I can see. Holy Mother! Why, when I was abroad, separated from home and Maude, many a night have I stretched myself upon the wet ground, and dreamed that I was seated with her in some green, shady, leafy place, just as Robin described, and said and acted exactly like what Robin told you, Oh! I have, and so have you. Haven't you, Maude? Ah, I'd wager my right hand you have, though you shake your head as much as to say no. Ah, Little John, you know nothing about it, not a bit; but how should you?"

"How should I?" echoed Little John, interrogatively.

"Yes," returned Will. "How should you? You never were in love!"

"I beg your pardon," returned the literal Little John, "I have, for a – I don't know how many years, and now as much as ever I was in my life."

"Oh, ha! ha! ha!" shouted Will. "Capital, capital – Little John in love – ha ! ha ! ha !"

"And why not Little John in love?" exclaimed he, good naturally. "I hope there's no harm, or nothing out of nature, in my being in love?"

"Oh, no," replied Will, still laughing heartily, "Oh no, I am glad to hear it, I like everyone to be in love, but St. Paul! Who is the lady? I should like to know that."

"Why, who should it be, but Winifred, your sister? I've loved her ever since she has been a child, and I am sure as much as you do Maude, or Much, Barbara, if he'd own it."

"There was a general laugh at this, and everybody congratulated Winifred. She bore the banter very well, and laughed as merrily at Little John's open confession as the rest, and when it had subsided, the attack upon Much was renewed.

"Aha!" cried Robin, "You see, Much, truth will show itself sooner or later. I was pretty near right in my description of the little scene in the dell, eh?"

"Who told you about it? How did you come to know anything about it? Someone must have told you, or you could not have entered into so minute a description."

"No one told me anything about it. It was a shrewd guess," said Robin; "And with respect to the faithfulness of my account, the truth is, I was inveigled into a scene of that sort once myself, by Marian."

"I inveigle you!" said Marian, "It was the re-verse, and if I had known then how you would have treated me after marriage –"

"Well?" said Barbara, eagerly.

"I should have got married much sooner, dear Barby," she concluded.

"There, Barbara, I hope you got what you wished," said Robin; "And after that I think you had better acknowledge you love Much very much, and Much will do the same."

"Aye, that he will!" said Much, suddenly bursting forth in a fit of enthusiasm; "I love this little girl with all my heart and soul, and more than that. Her eyes are to me as the stars on a dark night are to foresters when they see them over the tree tops after having lost their way, and nothing but those bright worlds to guide them. Her voice is sweeter to me than the music of all the birds in every forest in the world together. I would sooner be in her gentle company than in the merriest meeting I ever saw on May Day, or in the green wood. I would rather have a kind word or a loving look from her, than the best yew bow or oaken or crab tree staff ever made."

"To be with her is pleasanter than to be anywhere ah! Even Heaven, if she were not there too. I do love her, body and soul, heart and hand: and rather than do anything to pain or harm her, I'd walk to the Sheriff of Nottingham and ask him to hang me, or embrace a bishop, destroy myself, or do anything that I have a horror of. I love the dear little girl, bless her! And hope to show her by my conduct that I do truly love and honor her, the Holy Mother be my witness!" concluded Much, dashing a tear from his eyelid, which his enthusiasm had brought there.

"Hurrah! Honestly and nobly said, Much," cried Will, and then turning to Barbara, who was convulsively twisting her fingers, and looking tremblingly at Much, said "Why don't you rush into his arms, Barby? By the Mass, if I was a young lass, and a handsome smart fellow said as much of me before my face, or behind my back, why I'd jump into his arms and hug him round the neck till I nearly choked him. Wouldn't you, Maude? To be sure you would!"

"Oh, but I don't know that I should," observed Maude, quickly.

"Oh yes you would – I know I should, and if I would I know you would. Barby's foolish — she'll most likely never have such another chance."

"I am of Will's opinion," exclaimed Robin, with rather a wicked smile; "Marian would do it, and I don't see why Barbara should not."

However, Marian denied that she would, and the question was left open, but Barbara, in a timid voice, said –

"I believe that Much does – does love me; and I am very much obliged to him for the kind things he has said of me, and can only say in return that I –"

"Love him quite as much, most likely more, than he does you," interrupted Will, speaking rapidly. "Why what a while you take to say so – it never took me any time to tell Maude I was in love with her, did it, Maude?"

"Most decidedly not."

"To be sure not: Very well, then why don't you both embrace? Take her, Much. There, Barbara, you will find Much make a good husband, for he is a honest good Saxon, and as true as steel. And you, Much, will find my

little sister Barby as dear a little creature as I find Maude, bless her little heart. Though she is my sister, yet I will say a better-hearted little lass, a kinder or more affectionate soul, never lived, in all the world, than she."

"I believe it; I know it; I am sure of it!" cried Much, in another fit of enthusiasm, following Will's advice. And catching Barbara in his arms clasped her warmly and earnestly to his heart.

Their walk that evening extended not much further, and the return to Barnsdale Hall was no jot less pleasant than their departure from it had been an hour or so before, and when they were all assembled in the Hall, the old people were made acquainted with their daughters' choice by both Little John and Much, requesting them to bestow their hands upon them. Will Scarlet smoothed the way for them by telling his father the whole affair, and doing his best to prove to him that it was the very best thing that could have happened.

So hearty and earnest was he in his efforts to do this, that he left Little John and Much little to say, and took the words out of his father's mouth, in giving a free consent to any arrangement which would add to his children's happiness. The consent of the parents accompanied the willing consent of the girls, and a day being fixed for the wedding; they retired to rest that night with light hearts and gleeful thoughts.

In the morning Robin Hood, Little John, Will Scarlet, and Much were again in the glades of Barnsdale Wood, surrounded by a hundred merrie men. While they were enjoying their morning's repast, one of the merrie men came to Robin Hood and said –

"Noble master, I have good news for you and all us merrie men."

"Well, George-a-Green, let us have thy news, in order that we may be as glad as thou lookest," answered Robin.

"I have learned that the Bishop of Hereford comes this way with twenty followers today," said he.

"Aha! This is merry news," replied Robin, with glee. "At what time dost thou expect him?"

"When the sun is upon the turn, if he comes at all." replied George-a-Green.

"How got you your information?" interrogated Robin.

"One of the merrie men has just, within an hour or so, returned from a visit he has been paying some relatives in Derbyshire. He passed through Sheffield, on his way hither – there he learnt the Bishop was about to visit the Abbot of St. Mary's, and he posted hither with the news, knowing how welcome it would be."

"And right welcome it is: we will proceed to act upon it." cried Robin.

"Will Scarlet, do you take a party of twenty men, and watch the path which passes close by your father's hall."

“Do you, Little John, take the northern way with a like number of merrie men; You, Much, take the eastern with twenty, and I will take the high road. We must not let my lord bishop escape. We must feast him handsomely, as becomes his station, and he will pay accordingly. George-a-Green, single out a sturdy buck and a fine fat deer for my lord the bishop’s dainty eating, and see that it is done quickly.”

Little John, Will Scarlet and Much gathered their sixty men, and each departed with his complement to the route assigned him. They had not long been gone, when, according to Robin’s directions, George-a-Green, with the assistance of four or six of the men, carried the buck and deer to a spot Robin had desired them to bring it.

Then, getting some shepherds’ frocks – for the band kept in their store all sorts of disguises – Robin attired himself in one, and dressed six of his men in the remainder. Poles were erected from which to suspend the spitted buck and deer, a fire was kindled under each, the wooden spit was set revolving, and they awaited by the way side the bishop’s coming.

About the time the informer had stated, when the sun was contending with the fire which should have the strongest power in roasting the buck and deer, Robin observed the bishop and retinue advancing. Immediately he perceived their approach, he exclaimed –

“Here comes the prize. Good master bishop, I thank you for your company, and if I do not today astonish you more, or as much, as I did in Linton Abbey, why I’ll turn bishop myself! Now, my merrie men, pace round the venison, and be busily basting as his lordship advances. My life on’t, so soon as his nose finds out our occupation, we shall have him here full trot.”

The men did as Robin had commanded, and it seemed as if Robin had prognosticated correctly. For no sooner did the bishop come within nose-shot, than he pricked his steed into a gallop, and, closely followed by his retainers, quickly reached the spot where Robin and his men were employed, and continued their employment without scarce noticing him or his followers.

“Why, what is all this, what is the matter?” cried the bishop to Robin, who honored the ecclesiastic with a stare, but speaking not, continued his employment in the most industrious manner.

“Do you hear me, knave?” roared the bishop, enraged at the indifference with which he was regarded. “Dost thou hear me, base serf? What is the meaning of this roasting? For whom is this ado?”

“Anan!” [*Middle English: “I don’t understand”*] uttered Robin, staring at the bishop with an expression of the most exquisite vacancy.

“Fool! cried the bishop, hotly, “For whom have you killed the king’s deer?”

"For whom? Why for ourselves, to be sure," returned Robin, with a laugh.

"For yourselves, fool! What mean you? It cannot be that you are cooking this profusion of meat for yourselves only!"

"Oh, yes, it is though!"

"Why what are ye? To whose estate do ye belong?"

"We are simple shepherds; we keep all the year, and today we had a mind to make merry, to be joyful and happy, so we resolved to begin by eating some of the king's fattest deer. Now, that's the truth."

"Indeed! By whose permission have you slain the deer?"

"Anan?"

"Ass! Who gave you leave to kill the deer?"

"Oh! Who gave us leave? Nobody but our own will."

"And you expect to eat a part of what you are now cooking."

"Of a surety. Perhaps you'd like to take a mouthful with us?"

"You will find yourselves woefully mistaken, my fine fellow. The king shall know how his deer is slaughtered – he shall know of your doings, my jolly shepherd, never fear. I suppose you know it is death to kill ven'son without the especial leave and licence of the king. Because, if you do not, you shall be taught; so prepare at once to come with me to a prison, and from thence to a gibbet."

"A gibbet!"

"Ay! A gallows fifty feet high at least."

"But I don't feel disposed to go."

"I have no doubt you don't, but you and your tribe shall go, whether you feel disposed or no. And we shall see, then, whether you will be so ready to grin as you are now. Come, idiots, cease your work, and haste with me, for I have little time to waste in idle talking with thee or such as thee."

"Pardon, mighty bishop, pardon if we have done wrong it is from ignorance. We will honestly confess this, if you will but pardon us."

"Oh, ho! You change your senseless grinning now, so ye? I thought as much. Pardon you, eh? Not if I can help it. You shall before the king, and we shall see if he'll pardon you."

"We have wives and children, lord bishop; you will be merciful to us for their sakes; you will spare and pardon us!"

"Will I? Wives and children! How dare such wretches as you have wives and children? Talk to me of your wives and children to mitigate my wrath, too! Infamous hussies are they, I dare swear; and thy offsprings imps of wickedness and sin, only waiting to attain thy age to be more infamous than thou art. Pardon thee! By the inflexible Thomas à Becket, what is there in my looks that should make thee think I would be merciful to thee?"

"Nothing, I acknowledge, my lord bishop. You look the hard hearted, flinty-souled, unforgiving old villain you are. But it is not to you I appeal, it is to your habiliments – your office; it does not become your cloth, your position, as the shepherd over us sheep, to take so many lives to satisfy a paltry effort of consequence, or feeling of un-Christian wrath. I know your rocky nature, my Lord Bishop – I am well acquainted with your iron, unrelenting, savage disposition. Therefore I did not appeal to you, but to the charity which thy order is supposed to dispense."

"Now, the holy Job grant me patience! You audacious rebel, sacrilegious wretch, vile caitiff! Darest thou rail at me, the Lord's anointed and sanctified servant? Thou shalt swing high for this insolence, without a hope of redemption – thou shalt, churl! Seize him and his fellows!" roared the bishop to his followers; "If they offer to resist, cut them down without mercy!"

"You had better recall your words, my lord bishop, and stop with me to dine."

"No words!" shouted the bishop, in a frantic rage, "Seize them, or hew them down!"

"**Keep off!**" cried Robin, in a voice of thunder, as the men hastily approached to obey the bishop's orders. "**Keep off!** I charge ye, as you value your own lives. Bishop, beware! Draw off your men, or by'r Lady! you shall repent it an' you do not."

"Down with the base slaves!" bellowed the bishop, at the top of his voice, in a state of the most un-Christian like wrath.

"Down with them! Slay, and spare not!"

The bishop's men rushed at Robin and his merrie men to put their lord's wishes into execution, but the merrie men forming themselves into a little circle, their backs to each other, and with crooks for weapons, presented every way a formidable little front, not easily broken; while Robin placed his back against a tree, and dealt the first man who made at him such a blow with his crook, that he struck him nearly senseless to the ground. He then drew his bugle and blew three loud blasts; in an instant there was six and thirty merrie men appeared from the coverts and thickets around, where they they had been disposed ere the bishop's approach.

And a few minutes scarce elapsed ere Little John, Will Scarlet, and Much, appeared with the merrie men under their command. The aspect of affairs was not more suddenly than wonderfully changed. The bishop's men were speedily disarmed, and he himself placed in the situation of a prisoner; his mind misgave him upon seeing the merrie men clothed in Lincoln green, and Robin, doffing his shepherd's cloak, appear in a scarlet tunic.

"Now, my lord bishop, whose turn is it now to sue for pardon?" said Robin, addressing him with a stern look.

"Thou would'st not raise thy hand impiously against a servant of the holy church!" said the bishop, with a vast amount of fear that he would.

"Not a true servant, I would not, assuredly. But thou art not one, and I shall have therefore no compunction in quickly disposing of thee. Thou remembers me, my lord bishop? In fact, I am sure thou dost, by the efforts thou hast made with the king to cause my capture and those who live with me. Look in my face, lord bishop – thou knowest, me?"

"I do! I do!" groaned the bishop. "Thou'rt Robin Hood! If I had dreamed thou had been in my path, I would have – I would have –"

"Well, sir bishop, what would you have done?"

"Increased the number of my retinue to treble the amount of thy followers, and slain thee," meant the bishop, but said, "I would have gone some other way."

"It would have availed you nought," replied Robin; "We knew of your approach, and every route was guarded. Come, my lord bishop, you refused me and my companions mercy, would have slain us like dogs; prepare for a forester's retaliation. Little John, what shall we do with him?"

"I would not be too hard with him for the sake of the habit he wears," replied Little John, quietly.

"No – no, good forester, you counsel well. Remember the sacrilege, Robin Hood, which you commit in attacking or harming a minister of the Holy Word," interrupted the bishop in a tone of anxious appeal.

"No," continued Little John, "I'd not torture him, but cut off his head at a blow, and let me have the pleasure of digging his grave."

"What!" faintly articulated the bishop, aghast at the advice.

"Cut off thy head," said Robin enjoying the fright and horror which the bishop's countenance expressed. "He counsels well, my lord bishop; come, prepare."

"Pardon – pardon, I implore thee spare my life, I entreat, I beg of you, I am not prepared to die, and you know, according to the dictates of our holy religion, it is wicked for us to die unprepared," ejaculated the bishop, clasping his hands in an agony of earnest entreaty.

"Oh, ho! You change your arrogant tone now, do ye? I thought as much – pardon you, eh? Not if I can help it. You shall before your Maker, and see if he will pardon you," – exclaimed Robin, closely parodying the language the bishop had used to him previously.

"Little John, see that everything is duly prepared. We will at once to the trysting tree," he continued, addressing his worthy follower, who nodded his head in acquiescence. "Now, my lord bishop, thy hand," he concluded, turning to the fear-stricken churchman, "We will on to the judgment seat."

"Have mercy!" cried the bishop, "I can't die – I vow, if you will spare me this once, I will never, in any way, seek to molest thee or thy followers again."

"We will to the trysting tree, and there decide," observed Robin, with the most imperturbable gravity.

"On the side of mercy and charity, I hope and trust," suggested the bishop.

"We shall see," quietly remarked our hero, almost dragging the reluctant bishop in the direction he wished.

When they had reached the tree, Robin made him sit down by his side upon the roots, and under the widely spreading branches of an extensive oak, which was situated in the centre of a wide glade, and surrounded, at some distance from it, by every variety of tall forest trees, which threw their long shadows across it, accompanied by long strips of sunlight, which forced their way through openings here and there, making the grass look like velvet embroidered with golden figures of fanciful forms.

The deep shades of the trees presented an appearance of calm quiet, while the gushing melody of an unseen stream, which wound near the spot, gave an air of refreshing coolness — almost delicious. The bishop was in no frame to admire the scene, however beautiful it might have been. His fears for the safety of his life preponderated over every other sensation, and he watched every turn of Robin's countenance with a persevering scrutiny, which nearly overpowered all the latter's efforts to look serious; motioning to one of the men attending, he bade him bring some water.

"You will like to wash the dust from your eyes," he observed to the bishop, "in order that you may see my decision more clearly?"

"Anything you please," said the bishop, fawningly.

"And I suppose can make a good dinner previous to the adjudication?"

"Whatever you think is best," ejaculated the bishop.

"You shall have your dessert, and desert after it."

"As you desire."

"You are very courteous and considerate, my Lord Bishop of Hereford."

"You are pleased to flatter me," returned the ecclesiastic, hazarding a smile of a very doubtful expression.

"I am glad you think so, but I must tell you I am not much used to do it, and particularly to members of your order. However, we will settle that question after we have satisfied our appetites – here comes our dinner."

The bishop, glad of anything which prolonged the time ere Robin came to a decision to inflict a punishment upon him, was pleased to observe the ground soon spread with eatables of a most tempting nature to a hungry stomach. Now, he had eaten but slightly that morning, and the sight of the venison, cooked in various ways, accompanied by auxiliary esculents,

made his mouth water rarely. The smell was very savory, and the appearance very beautiful to behold, and soon a craving appetite got the better of his apprehensions.

He licked his chops and smacked his lips, anticipating his dinner with the fondest expectations; and when, after having performed his ablutions, he sat down to the dinner by Robin's desire, he quickly made the venison pasties, *collops* [*slices of meat*], &c., disappear, exhibiting the greatest relish for his repast. The food was washed down with bumpers of ale, old and strong; after that with good wine. The bishop was plied, by Robin, with cup after cup, and by the time fruit was being swallowed to settle the meat, the bishop began to grow extremely jovial. He vowed that Robin was a fine fellow – a rare choice blade, and that it was monstrous pleasant to have a good meal and a stiff cup of wine in the green wood. The quantity of wine he had swallowed soon placed his fears of death in a state of blissful oblivion, and, the fumes mounting to his head, he became uncommonly jolly.

"Why, my roaring blade, my sturdy roisterer, you keep good wine here – very good. It makes me warm all over, particularly my face!" he shouted. There was much truth in what he stated of the wine's effects upon him; his face waxed very flush, and his forehead and nose had assumed a very high state of crimson polish.

"Those who dine with me never quarrel with what I give them; If ever we quarrel, it is when the reverse is about to take place," observed Robin, significantly.

"Very true," replied the bishop, not understanding a word, "It's – a – hic as you say. More wine – hic! It runs through all my veins like fire. Ha! ha! ha! – you're merrie people here!"

"Yes, we are called the merrie men."

"Eh? Ah! Oh yes, to be sure – hic – ha! ha! ha! What a many of you there are, and how they keep jumping about!"

"At the moment Robin turned his head towards his men, impressed with an idea that it was as the bishop had stated. But he quickly ascertained that it was the optics of the reverend father which were dancing, and not his men, who, few in number, the rest being with the bishop's retainers at dinner, were most of them in reclining attitudes. He laughed and exclaimed – "They are nimble at the sport. You don't drink. They dance well, eh, lord bishop?"

"That do they – *wass heil* [*a toast*]. Oh! This wine is rare stuff. Hoy, fellow, fill my cup again!" he cried to old Lincoln, who still followed Robin with the same affectionate devotion he had when he was a child. He was old, turned of seventy, and though his head was whitened by time, his eye

was still bright, he still bore himself erect, and walked with a firm step. He approached and obeyed the bishop's desire, and, while he did so, the eye of the churchman, who was waxing exceedingly drunk, lighted on him, and he laughed inwardly in a convulsive manner for a short time. When he recovered his breath he exclaimed –

“Why, forester, thou has been very foolish sleeping on the damp grass, ha – hic – you see it is very bad.”

“Very bad!” echoed Robin. “What makes thee say that?”

“What, eh? Ha! ha! – hic – don't you see his head is turned mouldy, ha! ha! ha!” cried the bishop, pointing to Lincoln's white hair, and laughing until Robin thought he would have been suffocated. Our hero could not help laughing also, but Lincoln did not, and speculated upon the propriety of trying if his quarter staff would not make the bishop's few tufts of hair rather crimson.

“It is pretty amusement for a holy father of the Church,” he ejaculated, rather chafedly. “to jest upon the white hairs God has honored an old man with. By'r dear Lady, my lord the bishop would not laugh so merrily if my staff was to change the color of his hair somewhat.”

“Nay, Lincoln,” said Robin, in an under tone, “never heed him; let not the unconsidered words of a drunken man ruffle thee. There, away with thee, and wash down the sore saying with a cup of wine.”

“Let me see,” muttered the bishop. Ha! where was I – hic – a – oh! Ah! You're merry soul, Robin – eh, Robin What's your name – hic – eh, I say, my jolly yeoman – eh, where's the wine? Oh – hic – give it me. Why, a hic – you sinful dog, you're a – hic – very drunk – it's too early to be drunk, you villain – eh, I'm in a strange place, and you're all strange people here – you keep running round me, and keep bobbing about in a manner quite marvelous; and your trees, too, hic – they are holding hands and running round, or dancing round, or whisking round, or something – I don't care which but I wish you'd stop them, it makes me – hic – giddy to see them.”

“So I would, but they have a knack of not minding what I say. Come, you had better join in the dance with them, and that will cure thy giddiness.”

“Dance! eh, hic – that's very good – hic! Why, I haven't danced for years – hic never since I was – hic – I was, let me see – hic – ah! I was going to St. Mary's Abbey, and I shall never get there if I stop here.”

“Very likely, but we will have a merry bout of it before you go. Come, dance, my jolly bishop. Here is plenty of room for thee. Come, George-a-Green, lead his holiness out.”

“I can't dance in my riding boots,” hiccupped the bishop.”

“You don't know what you can do till you try, reverend father,” said

George-a-Green, taking hold of the bishop's hand, and lifting him up with a sudden jerk.

"I – I'll tell you what I know, though," ejaculated his holiness, with very doubtful perspicuity of speech. "I know that you are an irreverent rascal to drag me up this – hic – in this rough way – and, my fine fellow, it's very well for you I am in a good humor, or I'd cuff you soundly. I say, Robin, you're all drunk; not one of you can stand steady, and – hic – what makes the ground wave up and down so, as if we were on the sea – eh? Let's go to our couches, for it must be late the curfew's been ringing in my ears these two hours. I say, you've been greasing the grass. Look, how you all reel about – hic – I must say, though, it is very slippery. Let us have a song."

"A dance first," cried Robin, and then blew a blast on his horn. The summons was obeyed by the assembling of the merrie men, bringing the bishop's retainers in the midst of them, so excessively intoxicated they could scarcely stand. "Now," continued he, when all his men had arrived, "let the retainers of the bishop form a ring round their chief, and dance about him."

"I think they are all too drunk," said Little John, looking with disgust upon them.

"Then let one or two of the people mix with them to keep them up, and when my lord bishop is sober, and remembers what has occurred, he will be ready to eat his head for having thus degraded himself."

"Little John gave the necessary orders, and soon the fellows were all whirling madly round the bishop, who, excited by their laughter, and the rapidity with which their heads flew past him, commenced hallooing, jumping and dancing, until he measured his length upon the ground, and one of the merrie men, who was with the retainers, and was assisting to whirl these fellows at a tremendous speed suddenly quited his hold, and his companions were spread in an instant all over the ground, scattered here and there like swanshot discharged from a gun, many of them relapsing into a state of insensibility from excessive drink.

This was thought to be the case with the bishop, but, on Robin's approaching, he found him in a convulsion of laughter, his face perfectly scarlet, and his sides shaking violently. He gave him a good shake, and lifted him to these feet.

"You seem to enjoyed yourself, my holy and reverend father," said he, as he stood him up, finding some difficulty to prop up so unwieldy, helpless a lump of humanity – if such a term can properly be applied to one who was almost on a level with a brute.

"Enjoy myself? Of course," he mumbled. "It was all the fault of the ground, I could not help it; it would come up and take me down with it. Let's have a song –"

*St. Dunstan one morning he sat in his cell,
Heigh, eo, deo, daeg! All alone!
When a pair of bright eyes looked plump, he could tell,
Heigh, eo, deo, daeg! In his own!
He was reading the WORD, but never looked up,
Heigh, eo, deo, daeg! To the eyes!
For he knew that the devil –*

"No, no, that's not it" – *For he knew – for he knew –* "Ah! I forget it. Come, Mr. What-is-your-name, I want to go."

"When your lordship has paid your bill, you are free to depart," said Robin.

"Paid my bill – hic – paid my bill! I didn't know I was at a hostel; I thought I was – so I am – this is a wood, and no hostel."

"Yes, bishop, it is; I am the hostel keeper, and these you see around you are my waiters."

"What, all?"

"Yes, every one, and I charge according to the size of my hostel, the number of my waiters, and the length of time my guests favor me with their company."

"Oh! I've been here some time, and the cost will be wondrous high, so call in the reckoning."

"Little John here is my cashier he will tell you all."

"Well, Little Jo – Little – Little! Why, you are the son of a forest tree – you little! Oh! Well, my small cashier, what is to pay?"

"Where keep you your gold?" demanded Little John, composedly.

"What is that to thee, ill-mannered hound – hic – insolent knave – hic!"

"I would save you the trouble of counting it."

"Trouble of counting it – hic – do you think I'm drunk, eh? - hic – no. I'll count it all myself, all — it is in my portmanteau in my cloak. Fetch it me, I'll show you how to count it."

"Little John went and got the cloak, and from a pocket in the lining drew a small leathern case weighing very heavy. He opened it, and counted out three hundred broad pieces of gold. His heart gladdened at the sight, for it was equal to its metallic value. In revenge; the greater the sum, the greater would be the rage of the bishop when he discovered his loss. Little John returned to Robin Hood and the bishop, and said –

"There is enough gold to pay the reckoning, a goodly sum so goodly that, little as I know the bishop to love me or anyone but himself, I feel disposed to be charitably inclined to him for bringing such a sum with him."

"I am glad to find my Lord Bishop of Hereford did not forget his purse," exclaimed Robin, slapping him on the shoulder.

"St. Mary's Abbey, directly," muttered the drunken spiritual leader, exhibiting a great inclination to fall asleep.

"Ho, there! The bishop's horse!" cried Little John. One of the merrie men appeared leading the animal decked all over with branches of trees and bunches of flowers; while the men forming his retinue appeared with their dresses reversed and put on in all fashions, some of their faces blackened with charcoal, some reddened with ochre, and all looking in the most grotesque condition possible. Many of them were so tipsy as to be incapable of keeping the saddle, and these were fastened on to their horse's backs, many with their faces to the horse's tail. When they were all ready to depart, the bishop was hoisted on to his steed with some little difficulty, owing to his state of utter helplessness. To prevent the chances of a severe fall, he was also bound to his steed, and no sooner was it accomplished than his own garments, as well as the trapping of the horse, were profusely decorated with sprigs and flowers, making him appear to be allied, by the closest ties of consanguinity, to that annual specimen of animal vegetation, '*Jack i' the Green*.'

A party of the merrie men, by Robin's orders, led them on their way to St. Mary's Abbey. When they were within a short distance of it, they lashed the horses of the bishop and his retinue into a gallop, and sent them at full speed to the gates of the Abbey. When they drew up, and it was known in the Abbey that the right reverend, father in God, the Lord Bishop of Hereford had arrived, the haughty abbot, accompanied by a long train of ghostly fathers, came on to greet him.

Their astonishment and horror may be conceived, upon seeing the woeful plight of the prelate and his followers. Nor was it in any degree lessened by a man, habited in the grab of a retainer, but who was one of the merrie men disguised, advance, and hearing him say –

"Most august and reverend father, Robin Hood sends you these presents greeting."

"The bishop was soon released from his unsaintly situation, and carried to a couch, upon which he was laid, in order that he might sleep off the effects of his deep potations. In the morning when he awoke, with a throbbing, beating agony in his head, and a sickly stomach, he was made acquainted minutely with the unseemly condition in which he and his

attendants arrived. His rage knew no bounds. He ejaculated the most fearful anathemas upon Robin and his followers. He stamped, tore his hair, at least as much he could get from the small tufts which he called by that name, and fairly danced with passion.

He swore he would have a bitter revenge, and called upon the abbot to assist him with men, horses, and money – a call which the abbot at once complied with. And few days subsequent to the occurrences just narrated, my lord bishop had girded on his sword, and at the head of a goodly company of fifty picked men, he set out from St. Mary's Abbey, to capture Robin Hood and hang him, as soon as he was in his power. Not only was he bitterly galled to think of the treatment he had endured, the vile indignity which had been put upon him, but he chafed to think of the loss of his three hundred golden merks, and resolved was he to have revenge to the uttermost.

Now, it so happened that Robin Hood was making his way unattended to St. Mary's, for the purpose of inquiring after the bishop's health, in the name of his late entertainer, accompanied by a request, that should he be passing in that direction again, he would take the trysting tree in his way. There was also another motive, which was his principal object for pursuing this route — it was to pay a visit to the castle of Sir Richard of the Lee, and ascertain what success he had met with in negotiation with St. Mary's abbot.

A turning of the path, as he sauntered leisurely along, showed him the bishop and his company advancing. At a glance he recognized them, and instantly guessed the nature of their expedition. He was placed in rather an awkward predicament. He was at too great a distance to summon his followers in the time to save his own life, unless there was a great effusion of blood – an occurrence he invariably endeavored to avoid; and if he retreated, he could only lead the bishop and his men into the wood in pursuit, and then, to get them all in his power, many lives would necessarily be lost. The bishop and his people were advancing quickly; he had no time to spare, something must be decided upon, and that quickly, if he wished to effect a mastery over them by stratagem rather than force.

"My lord bishop," he muttered, "has Christian charity enough, if I stand here thinking until he come up, to relieve me from all worldly cares and grief's pains and pleasures. But I am very well satisfied with the world as yet, and should be loath to leave it. So with your leave, Master Bishop, I'll stay in it a little longer; let me see ha! by the Holy Mother, they recognize me."

As he said this, a voice cried loudly and clearly,

"Robin Hood, traitor! Surrender!"

But he had no such thought, and turning him about, he espied at a short distance a cottage. Starting off, he ran at the top of his speed toward it. Upon reaching it, he found a door partly open, he entered swiftly, and instantly barricaded it on the inside."

"God – a – mercy!" cried an old wife, seated at her spindle, "Who are you, what's all this? *Ave Maria!* – spare an old woman!"

"Never fear, good mother," returned Robin. "It is I who have to beg thee to save my life."

"Who art thou?" Demanded the old dame.

"Why dost thou ask that? It cannot serve thee to know," replied Robin.

"But it may thee; it may be for thy good I ask, my son," exclaimed the ancient damsel.

"I have no time to bandy words, good mother. I am an outlaw, whom men call Robin Hood – yonder comes the Bishop of Hereford, with a host of followers. He dined with me in the green wood a few days since, and now comes to repay me for his entertainment by swinging me from the tree, if he can catch me."

"If thou art Robin Hood, the bold and gentle and thy voice tells me thou art he," said the old women, in an earnest voice, "then will I serve thee unto the utmost, even unto death. For can I ever forget, my noble youth, that I was laid upon the ground of this hut stretched in sickness, a lone widow, no soul near but my own, no eye on me save the Lord's. I was dying with cold and want. You came in by chance and found me thus, you raised me up, and spoke kindly, and treated me tenderly and fondly, as if I had been thine own mother, instead of a stranger. And by thee I was fed, and clothed, and restored to health. May the holy Mother bless thee, now and forever for it! And when I asked those who brought me food and raiment from thee, who thou wert, they said thy name was Robin Hood, bold and fearful to thy foes, but gentle and kind and good to those who need thy aid and succor. So, kind youth, an' it cost me my life, if thou wilt tell me how I can save thine, I will cheerfully lay down my old bones to do it,"

"I do not require so much of thee, good mother, as that. It is to save life I seek thy aid, else not an inch had I budged for the bishop, had his retinue been twice its number. Here come my foes."

The sound of horses' footsteps in rapid approach saluted their ears: his pursuers arrived, and commenced a series of thundering blows upon the door, calling upon the inmates to open or they would break it down.

"Let them knock, the door will hold them out, never fear," said Robin, encouragingly.

"They will murder us," ejaculated the old women, in alarm.

"Not without some trouble," returned Robin; "But I have no desire, I confess, for many reasons, to put them to that trouble; and as an unequal force is only to be overcome by stratagem, we must exert our wits to defeat the intentions of those without. You tell me you are disposed to assist me, and I honestly believe you are. You may do so successfully and effectually, if you will closely follow my instructions."

"I will do everything you wish me, to the best of my poor ability," exclaimed the woman.

"Then you must lend me your character, and take mine," said Robin.

"Anan?"

"We must change clothes," repeated Robin.

"Change clothes!" reiterated the woman, "That will be no use; they will easily discover a weak old woman, though habited in thy garments, is not the bold Robin Hood."

"Not if you follow my directions," returned Robin. "I will disguise you so effectually, that unless you speak, they will not know the difference between us. All you have to do is to feign intoxication, and leave the rest to me. Now, old lady, you need no more than mind my presence, than if I were your own son and as we have no time to lose, let us make the exchange at once."

The old women assented with a smile, and their garments were speedily at each other's disposal. Robin soon dressed himself in the old women's grey coat and head gear, and then assisted to make the old lady's toilet. She got on his chausses, his green tunic and buskins, and he put on her belts and weapons in the green wood fashion. He reddened her cheeks with ochre, made her a beard and moustaches of his own hair, which he cut for that purpose, and made adhere to her chin with some of the resinous gum exuding from a pine log. He blackened her grey hair with charred wood and grease, and placed his cap jauntily on the side of her head. The dress seemed to impart new life to the old woman, for her toilet was completed. She arranged those parts of Robin's disguise which he, from ignorance of the method of wearing, had left disordered and when they were both quite ready, and he had given her copious directions how to act, he prepared to admit the foe."

The bishop and his party, be it understood, had never, all this while, ceased their clamorous demands for admittance, and had appealed earnestly but vainly to their staffs, to obtain it for them. Several ineffectual efforts in different fashions had been made to force the door, but none succeeded.

One of the retainers volunteered to batter it in with his horse's heels – an offer which was accepted – and he backed his steed to the door. Then, holding his head hard, he spurred him. Up went the horse's heels with a terrific clatter against the door. A second time he essayed it, but a fellow soldier, thinking probably to infuse fresh vigor into the kicks of the horse, who had been taught this trick, gave him a sudden prick on the haunches with his spear, and produced a result totally unexpected, and decidedly opposite to the one intended. The animal plunged instantly forward, then flung up his hind quarters with a sudden jerk, which had the effect of unhorsing his rider like a shot, making him perform a rapid somersalt.

His evolution was attended with a disastrous result, for his heels came in violent contact with the head of the bishop, who had ridden close to him to see the consequences ensuing from this man-[or horse-] œuvre, and one of his spurs catching in the skin of the doughty prelate's forehead, tore it from there obliquely down to the side of his chin.

The pain of this tear – it made quite a gutter – independent of the blow his skull received, so exasperated the bishop, that on finding the man thrown across his saddle, he upraised a sort of golden mace, illustrative of his dignified station, and returned the compliment by inflicting a tremendous hit upon the head of the prostrate soldier, which made it sound like a blow on a drum, and rendered the man at once insensible.

Smarting with pain and rage, he flung the body to the ground, and galloping up to the door, inflicted a number of blows with his mace upon it, with such rapidity and perservering vigor, that his men could not but admire his strength of arm.

While in the full performance of this feat, his passion not being half expended, the door suddenly opened; he missed his blow. The mace would, not having a resistance, describe a circle until it was stopped by the chest of his reverence's horse, who, immediately upon his receiving this frightful whack, commenced an instantaneous series of plunges, of so violent a nature, that the bishop had not the trouble of dismounting, but was shot into the centre of the cottage floor, with a force which shook every joint in his body as if it would dislocate it.

He was instantly raised, almost stunned and breathless, to his feet, by his people and the confusion this incident created did much to prevent the artifice being discovered which Robin was playing upon them. As soon as he could speak, his reverence commanded the supposed Robin to be seized, bound, and forced on horseback. Robin, in his character of the old woman, mimicking her tremulous voice, pretended interference, but was rudely thrust aside, and the fictitious Robin having been bound, was placed upon a horse.

Sick, full of pain, and nearly blind from his heavy fall, the bishop again mounted his steed, which had been recovered after galloping a short distance, and quieted, and commanded his people to make for the wood, and proceed through it until they reached the trysting tree — there and then to hang up, unshriven, his prisoner as an example, a terror, and a warning to all outlaws, existing or might exist, present and to come, not to emulate his deeds. As soon as they were all well away, Robin also made for the wood, and by a series of short ways known almost only to himself, he was soon close by the trysting tree. As he entered an open glade, he saw at a distance Little John, Will Scarlet, and Much, and he, though at some considerable way off, heard Little John say, his voice sounding clearly in the quiet air — “Who comes yonder over the lee? She looks like an old witch. Marry and by’r Lady, I hope she has come to cast no spell upon the merrie men, my noble master, or the green wood; an’ I thought so, I would try an arrow at her.”

“You couldn’t hit her if you were,” laughed Will.

“Not hit her!” echoed Little John. “Why not?”

“If she is a witch, she’d laugh all your efforts to scorn,” replied Will; “She’d be like the dogs of the Curtal Friar of Fountain’s Abbey – catch your arrows as fast as you shot them.”

“The Curtal Friar, who is he?” demanded Little John.

“Have you never heard of him in these parts?” asked Will, with some astonishment.

“Never,” replied Little John.

“Oh, then, I’ll tell you; he is —”

“For certes!” cried Much, interrupting Will, as he was about to commence his story, “but this old dame looks marvelously like a witch. She does not walk like another woman, and she looks stouter and differently to what old women generally look. By the Mass, Little John, if you don’t try an arrow on her, I will. I don’t like looks of old hags such as her. Will you try, or shall I?”

“As you please. I have as little love for such people as reptiles or wood vermin of any sort, and would no more mind bringing one down than the other. I’ll bend a bow on her if you wilt,” answered Little John, with a desire to make himself agreeable. Whether the supposed witch thought so, is another affair.

“Hold your hand!” cried Will, interposing, “don’t be too hasty; she wears petticoats, and I would not harm anything or anyone that did so, if I could help it. Besides, you don’t know she’s a witch, only from her looks. Many a rough outside covers a good and pleasant inside, and the old dame

may be a good hearted Christian, albeit she not look very attractive; besides, you know how strict Robin keeps the rule that no female shall be molested or meet with harm wherever he and the merrie men congregate; so wait till she comes up before you do aught to injure her."

"By the holy apostles but she be a witch. Look there, Will, did you ever see a woman as tall as that, or stride i' that fashion?" cried Little John, pointing to Robin, who, in his haste to join his companions, had dropped the stooping gait and halting walk he had assumed, and now strode towards them as fast as he could walk.

"A witch! a witch!" shouted Much, following Little John's example in bending a bow, and aiming an arrow at Robin. "By the Holy Mother, she comes not here to play any of her wicked and devilish pranks."

"Hold thy hand!" cried the imaginary witch, at the top of his voice. "I am Robin Hood! Do you not know me?" and he pulled off his headgear, displaying his well-known face, to the surprise of his followers. He was soon at their side.



"I must have been changed indeed for you not to have known me," he continued.

"You looked so ugly," returned Will, with a laugh. "What made you don such a disguise as that?"

"I fell in with my Lord Bishop of Hereford, who has a party of men, between fifty and sixty in number, as near as I can judge, with him, for the purpose of capturing me. I came suddenly upon them, was recognised, and a cottage, inhabited by an old woman, being near, I made my way for it. I reached it, disclosed my name and situation to her, and, by my request, she changed dress with me, even while the

bishop and his followers were battering at the door. When we had arranged our disguises, I opened the door, the suddenness of which, I believe, caused his reverence's horse to fling him, and he arrived on his back near the middle of the room.

He was assisted to rise, and, without investigating or questioning my representative, he ordered her to be seized, bound, mounted on horseback, and borne to the trysting tree, to be hung from one of the branches. Now we have not a moment to lose. Much, get me instantly a

suit, that I may doff these women's garments. Little John, take as many of the merrie men as you can gather immediately, and to the trysting tree at once. Will, you gather such of the men who are not within immediate call as speedily as you can, and join us there. Away, all of you!"

His orders were instantly obeyed, and in a few minutes Much returned with a suit of forest habiliments, which Robin quickly changed for those of the old dame's. He then repaired to the trysting tree, where he found Little John posted with a body of at least sixty archers. He arranged them in such a way that they effectually commanded the entrance to the glade, and all parts of the glade itself. They were hidden, in order that the bishop and his people might be completely in Robin's power without a chance of helping themselves and when they were suffered to depart, it should be upon terms highly advantageous to Robin and his men.

A short time were they posted in their coverts when the sound of horses' footsteps met their ears, and told them his reverence was approaching. And when he had passed through the avenue leading to the glade, and all his men likewise, he was startled by the sound of a bugle, and the sudden appearance of a stream of men commanding the entrance, and taking up their places in all the tenable positions the spot afforded. A cold shudder passed through the bishop's frame as he looked on this terrible array of foresters, and noticing among them one habited in a scarlet tunic, to whose words the bowmen paid the most implicit attention, he turned to the false Robin, his prisoner, and in a voice which anticipations and misgivings of a most disagreeable nature made exceeding faint, demanded—

"Who is that, yonder, who is commanding those outlaws?" He expected the answer, for he was certain he recognized the form.

"Marry, my lord bishop, I should think it could be no other than he whom men call Robin Hood."

"I thought so," groaned the bishop; "I thought it was he. Who, then, art thou, wretch?"

"That can be of no consequence to thee. O thou wise in thine own conceit! Thou man of blood and unmercifulness! Thou who sellest Christian charity to him only who can pay thee best! What can it be to thee who I am? There stands he whom thou seekest to slay. Take him, if thou canst!"

"Who art thou?" demanded the bishop, chafing very much, "that I may know thee hereafter?"

"If Robin Hood does thee justice, thou wilt know none but Satan hereafter. And were it not that I shall add to thy rage and discomfiture by answering thy question, thou shouldst not know. I am a woman, bold

bishop; and thou hast expended all thy valour and that of thy followers, in capturing a poor weak old woman, as thou shalt presently see.”

“The curse of Satan upon thee, thou old hag! Have I been deceived thus?” cried the bishop, gnashing his teeth.

“Aye, thy merciless errand hath turned upon thyself!” exclaimed the old lady, with persevering morality. “Hadst thou followed Robin Hood’s good example – given to the poor what thou hast extorted—”

“Peace, hag!” roared the bishop. “I want none of thy cant. Ho, there, men! Through the glade with ye! Fight through these outlaws! Cut thy path through them, thou gallant hearts!”

But the gallant hearts would have found it an easier task to be commanded to do this than to accomplish it, for at a signal from Robin, his men bent their bows and drew their arrows to the head, ready for instant discharge.

And such was the repute of the terrible truth of their aim, that all the bishop’s men instinctively shrunk in their saddle as they observed this movement on the part of the foresters.

At this moment, too, Will Scarlet arrived with the remainder of the merrie men, and so completely commanded the avenue which formed the entrance to the glade, that it was easily seen it would be quite madness to attempt to force a passage through them, and, therefore, his reverence’s followers, at a call from Robin, laid down their arms.

“Woe is me! Woe is me!” exclaimed the bishop, wringing his hands; “that I should ever have seen this day,”

“Welcome, my Lord Bishop of Hereford,” cried Robin Hood, advancing to him, “Welcome to the green wood again. Hast thou liked thine entertainment a few days ago so well, that thou hast come again to prove my hospitality?”

The bishop groaned in reply. He could not articulate a word. The recollection of his degradation on that day was productive of rage and torment, and the probability that this day would see, if not his death, a similar outrage upon his clerical character, made his spirit quail within him.

“How is it, my lord bishop, thou dost not seem so jovial as thou wert when we parted? What ails thee? Art thou not glad to be again in my society?” continued Robin, after waiting for an answer.

“I cannot say I am,” ejaculated the bishop, mournfully. “The position in which I am placed renders such a feeling impossible. You must know, by my armed followers, the reason of my being here, and, I expect, you will

retaliate accordingly. I have only this to say, that if thou dost this time spare me, and let me and my followers pass unhurt, I will not, on any future occasion, under any circumstances, seek thy destruction, or that of those connected with thee. And I do not see but thou shouldst the more readily agree to this, as it will save thy soul from bearing an awful weight of sin, as thou wouldst, in slaying me, murder a high priest of the Holy Church."

"It has never been my province to shed blood – all my actions prove it; and any assertion to the contrary, my lord bishop, is false. Nevertheless, it would be but justice that thou, who has sought my life for so long a period unrelentingly, even after partaking of my hospitality, should, when again in my power, be retaliated upon to the extent of pain thou wouldst have inflicted upon me."

"I don't see that," mildly remonstrated the bishop.

"I am afraid I do," returned Robin.

"No," said the bishop, "our positions in society are so different. You are an outlaw, out of the pale of the law, against whom every loyal man should turn his hand. I am in the pale of the law, subject to all its benefits. I am, too, almost above it, being one of the high dignitaries of the Holy Church. In pursuing you, I did but fulfill, however painful to my feelings—"

"Hum!" coughed Will Scarlet, rather loudly.

"I say, however painful to my feelings," continued the bishop, regardless of the interruption, "the duty of a good and true subject, and no other. You ought to consider this, and let it weigh in my favour accordingly."

"Look you, bishop," returned Robin Hood, sternly, "I know by what standard to measure your loyalty – I know how far you sacrifice personal interest for public weal, and were I to suffer that knowledge to influence my conduct to thee one jot, the next minute to this should see thee dangling to and fro from one of the limbs of the tree beneath whose broad boughs you stand."

"But, looking at your position in society, and knowing the good it is in your power to do unto others, I am inclined to waive the right which a strict observance of our forest law places in my grasp, and spare thee."

"Noble forester!" interrupted the bishop.

"Upon certain conditions, to which, if you subscribe, I swear by the Holy Mother that you and your followers shall pass free."

"Name them," muttered the bishop, in a tone of misgiving, an indefinable dread of an exaction of almost impossibilities passing through his mind, "Name them," he ejaculated faintly, "and if I can subscribe I will."

"If you do not subscribe to them, you shall most assuredly, in less than an hour from this time, depart to the next world full swing; and unless you have a fancy for immediately trying the warmth of the climate you must ultimately visit, I have little doubt but you will agree to my conditions."

"Pray proceed with them," groaned the prelate.

"Firstly, you at once give over lying, and swear to impose upon thyself a most rigid penance for every lie you utter," commenced Robin.

"Agreed," returned the Bishop readily, not caring whether he kept it or not.

"Secondly, you establish an alms-giving day to the poor of your diocese — the alms to come from your private property."

"I have very little private property," urged the bishop.

"To see how firmly the habit of lying grafts itself on those who have accustomed themselves to use it!" said Robin. "I did not ask thee for a lie, but to agree to the condition. I am quite satisfied as to thy power of doing it, and will insure the fulfillment of thy consent, in swearing thee by an oath of so sacred a character that even thou durst not break it — do you consent to this condition, my lord bishop? I have very little time to waste in argument. You must say yes or no, and according to your reply so shall I act. Now, yes or no?"

"Why — a — yes I will give what I can spare," answered the bishop, hesitatingly, letting the words fall from him as if he was losing in each a treasure.

"I shall not trust to your estimate of what you can spare, but name the amount which you shall dispense weekly to the most needy and wretched your diocese affords."

"You cannot do that. You do not know what I can afford. You don't know the calls upon my money. I know only how much I can devote of my income to such an unlooked-for purpose," energetically cried the bishop.

But Robin proceeded to name a sum which the bishop vowed and protested he could not afford. And as he still persisted in such a declaration, Little John was directed to bring a twisted thong of deer hide, capable of bearing a weight as great as the bishop's. Now, as he had a strong belief when he saw it that it would be strong enough to bear him, and as he had no very earnest desire to test its suspensory capabilities, he declared the argument conclusive, and gave his consent, very reluctantly it is true, but still he gave it.

There was an outrider which Robin affixed to it – a kind of codicil, which was, that the bishop, independent of this alms-day, should at all times be charitable to the poor, be kind and good, fulfill sincerely and truly the functions of his sacred character, ministering to the wants of the wretched in body and spirit, by such consolation and sympathy as the religion afforded, and with whose dictates he was bound to comply, visiting the weary couch of the sick, listening attentively and tenderly to the sad histories of the miserable and wicked, cheering them with the mild doctrines of the Holy Word, and easing the anguish of their spirits by gentle words of balm and hope. And to forswear also the vile and infamous practices carried on by those of his order, to a horrible extent, under the cloak of religion, of tempting young and innocent maidens and young wives to sin – practices daily productive of misery and wretchedness, of blightings and heart breakings to all concerned, save those who had produced it. With some little restiveness the bishop conceded to this condition, and Robin swore him by a most fearful oath, which the bishop, accustomed as he was to coin and administer vows of a tremendously binding nature, shuddered as he took; but he inwardly resolved that he would take the first opportunity of getting absolved from it by the Pope. It was a compulsory oath, and, therefore he did not choose to consider quite binding, When, however, he had taken it, Robin exclaimed–

“Well, bishop, that is done – you have subscribed to that. You must now swear that you will not on any occasion seek to injure me or those connected with me at any time, or under any circumstances.”

“I have already promised it,” he answered.

“But you must swear it!”

“I do, by St. Paul!”

“That will not do. Swear by our Holy Lady to forfeit all hopes of worldly enjoyment, and all escape from the fangs of his majesty, the foul fiend, in the next world!”

“I do swear it.”

“Very well, my lord bishop, you are now free to depart.”

“Many thanks; I am very glad to hear you say so – right glad am I. Bid my men to mount, and let us away!”

“Will you not stay and take some refreshment?”

“No, no, none – not any; I am anxious to be gone,” cried the bishop, quickly, fearing a repetition of the previous entertainment he experienced at Robin’s hands.

"You had better have a pasty. You are a fasting, man?"

"Not a bit."

"A stoup of wine will cheer you!"

"Not a drop."

"Will you neither eat nor drink with me?"

"I am neither an hungered nor athirst. I have no appetite. Pray let me be gone. You told me I was free to depart; you will not therefore detain me, after giving see a promise to suffer my free departure?"

"As you please; I seek not to detain you. Little John, his lordship wishes to depart."

"Certainly, noble master, since you permit it," said Little John, advancing; "And for my part, I like his lordship's company so little, that I will not seek to detain him a moment longer than necessary. Therefore, master bishop, you will perhaps settle at once?"

"Settle!" echoed the bishop, in a low tone of surprised enquiry. "What do you mean by settle?"

"Does your lordship forget that you are at our hostel; and though you have taken no refreshment, your people will, and your horses have already. You cannot expect to occupy our premises, and not to pay for so doing. Besides, though our noble chief permits you to depart free, we must have a largess for your people, who are our prisoners. Do you understand?"

"I do," moaned the bishop; "Take what you will, and let me depart quickly."

"Is the portmanteau in the same place as usual?" asked Little John, with a laugh.

"It is there," said the bishop, pointing to a small leathern case affixed to the saddlebow of his steed.

"It feels heavier than the last did," said Little John, unfastening it and lifting it from its place.

"There's more in it," said the bishop, quietly, making desperate efforts at an air of resignation.

"I am very glad to hear it," replied Little John; "How much more?"

"Two hundred golden merks more."

"Two hundred! aha! why then, here is five hundred golden merks?"

"Even that sum. But you will not rob me of it all?" appealed the bishop, with a look, in which the question, whether it was not better to be hanged than submit to all this quietly, appeared to be strongly debated; but the desire to live had it, and making a strong gulp, he tried to be resigned to his fate.

"Rob you of it!" cried Little John, scornfully. "You do not understand the distinction between robbing and taking property from a man which is not his, in order to restore it to its proper owners. You have wrung this money by the vilest species of robbery taking it under false pretenses from those who cannot spare it, and we take it from you to give it back unto them; therefore your vile charge is a base lie!"

"That's forest philosophy," laughed Robin.

"Its legality is questionable, though," muttered the bishop.

"That may be," said Robin; "There are many abstract laws of justice and right, which those framed by men incited by self-interest make illegal. But we are not governed by your laws, we keep to the good old primitive notion of right and wrong, and do our best to fulfill its dictates. The point respecting the money is one on which we are more than particular, so I think you had better pay it and look as agreeable as you can over it."

"I cannot help myself. Take what you will, and let me go."

"There is one more request which I have to make," said Little John, looking at Robin Hood for approbation "It is that as our spiritual director is not with us at Barnsdale, and we have been for some time without the benefit of his religious aid, you, my Lord Bishop of Hereford, sing us a Mass."

"Gross impiety! Profane request! I would rather die than comply with it!" said the bishop, energetically.

"It is your duty to aid us in offering up our worship at all times," said Robin, quietly but firmly; "Little John says truly; we have not heard Mass for some time, and an opportunity like the present should not be thrown away. Come, my lord bishop, prepare to oblige us, for we will hear a Mass before you go."

"Not from me. It would be a mockery so monstrous, a sin so mortal, a wickedness so tremendous, that I should expect to be stricken dead by the lightnings of the Almighty's wrath," cried the bishop angrily.

"My lord bishop," said Robin, sternly and gravely, "Judge not of us by those whose stations are high and mighty in the land. We reverence humbly and respectfully the religion, which is the guide in all our acts, too deeply, too sincerely do we worship, to make a mockery, or think of making one, of aught so holy. Believe me, within the walls of your vast

cathedral you will find none who will be more earnest or devoted auditors than myself and those around you, who are my followers. Come, my lord bishop, let me lead you to the altar, for we have one in this green wood and believe me, while the Mass is proceeding, you will not be interrupted by anything profane or irreverent."

"May I believe?" said the bishop, doubtingly.

"I am not given to lying at any time," answered he bitterly, "Especially upon religious matters; follow me."

He led the way to an enclosed spot, a short distance from the glade, and there upraised, in the center of a kind of dell, was erected an altar of earth. It was dressed after the fashion of those in the chapels, abbeys, and cathedrals; and everything upon it, and connected with it, was so well arranged, that his reverence could not but wonder at it, and commenced the Mass with much less repugnance than he had before expressed.

It was a touching sight to see in that small dell an hundred and fifty men kneeling, bareheaded, reverently to hear the Holy Word, without uttering word or sound, save when it was their duty to make a response, and to see the bishop, assisted by some of the younger members of the band, and his own people, before that forest altar of grassed earth and small flowers, performing the ceremonies of the Mass with all the fervour, and less of the ostentation which he exhibited in his splendid cathedral.

In no way was he disturbed while it proceeded, and when it concluded, he received the thanks of the merrie men, heartily but honestly expressed. They showed their gratification in taking most of the bishop's retainers to the glade where stood the trysting tree, and in a very short space of time placing before them venison, dressed in all fashions, with plenty of ale to wash it down. In a few words Robin desired Much to see a repast spread for the bishop, while he kept him in conversation. The prelate was so astonished by the strict attention and quiet, but earnest devotion the merrie men exhibited during mass, that he could not help asking a variety of questions relative to their method of living in the green wood. Robin gave him a diffuse account, and during it gradually led him to the trysting tree, the scene of his former merriment. Here he found his men eating with all the vigour a good appetite could produce, and quaffing with strong evidence of much thirst. The sight of their joviality fired him; he instantly experienced the gnawing of a fine appetite himself; and licked his lips with sympathy, as he saw a fellow make a full quart of ale disappear down his capacious gullet.

"Your men are well employed," observed Robin, pointing out a knot of the most voraciously inclined he could clap his eye upon. "I am just about to eat a little," he continued, "and you had better share what is spread there with me."

"I had better not," said the bishop, with a faint effort of resistance, remembering what had transpired beneath that tree; "I had better not, albeit I feel rather hungry" – he meant famished.

"Never stay thy appetite," observed Robin, with an air of seriousness, "It is bad for thy health. Come, sit thee down with me, and eat thy fill; and when thou hast done that you can depart instantly, and I swear to thee it shall be unconditional and without molestation."

"Well, I suppose I must," exclaimed the bishop, rubbing his hands, his mouth watering, and preparing to sit down beneath the trysting tree, where plenty of esculents were laid. With something like a wicked spirit of tantalization, Robin laid his hand upon his arm and stopped him.

"There is no compulsion," said he; "You are not compelled. If you dislike to sit down and partake of that rich venison pasty, moistened with some choice wine, pray abstain. It is worse to force the appetite than to check it."

"Oh, but my appetite is very good and you say it is bad for the health to fast too long. Therefore, since it is here, and I feel so well-disposed to eat, it is perhaps better that I should," argued the bishop, now almost as afraid that he should lose his dinner, as he had previously been that he would be compelled to eat one.

"Well, then, in the Holy Mary's name, sit down and eat thy fill," exclaimed Robin.

No further pressing did the bishop need. Down he squatted at once, and commenced, as if it was exactly that day six months since he had tasted anything, drinking proportionally. Robin was as profuse in his liberality as heretofore, and he plied the jovial ecclesiastic with so much food and wine, that he found it uncomfortable to move, and wished heartily that the skin of his portly stomach had patent elastic expansive powers, which would enable it to distend to any extent required.

But as that did not happen to be the nature of his skin, and to prevent the danger of what is vulgarly termed bursting, he thought it prudent to leave off eating – drinking he could not – he was naturally addicted to it.

Long indulgence had made it necessary to him, and the flavour of the wine Robin placed before him was so peculiarly good, that it was impossible to forego the pleasure of imbibing a very large quantity of it. It is not perhaps an extraordinary fact, that the fumes of wine will mount to the brain, and the more one drinks, the greater the chance of one's getting incontestably drunk. This law applied to the Bishop of Hereford, for after an hour's indulgence in deep potations, he was quit as much intoxicated as on the previous occasion, and behaved quit as extravagantly.

When Robin thought the scene had been acted long enough, he ordered the merrie men to see the bishop's retainers mounted, and his reverence, who lay laughing, and trying vainly to articulate sentences, in a state of helpless drunkenness, to be placed upon his horse, and bound to it, with his back to its head, and his face to the tail, which was given him to hold instead of the reins.

"Ha ha! – hic! ho!" he muttered, almost unintelligibly, as he received the tail. "I did – hic! I didn't know – hic! I was – stand still, sir – how the beast prances – hic! and turns round, and round, and round, and – hic! I didn't know – hic! I was so near the mane – hic! I've mixed 'em all up together, reins and all – hic! What makes him hold his head down so – hic! heigh! Hold up your head, you brute. How he plunges; no matter good bye, you – hic you jolly rogues – hic! you funny fellows – hic – hurrah!"

The lash was applied to the steed, and away he galloped with the bishop, who hallooed and swore he was "backing," and called on them to stop. He was followed by his men, who raised three cheers for Robin and his merrie men.

And drunk with liquor and excitement, almost to madness, galloped on, shouting, roaring, whooping, and swearing, until they reached the Abbey of St. Mary's again and the Lord Bishop of Hereford was once more consigned to the arms of the abbots and the monks, in a worse plight than before, to wake the next morning eaten with rage, shame, and mortification.



Chapter 3

*Now labyrinths which but themselves can pierce,
Methinks conducts them to some pleasant ground;
Where welcome hills shut out the universe,
And pines their lawny walk encompassed round.
There, if a pause delicious converse found,
Twas but when o'er each heart the idea stole,
(Perchance awhile in joy's oblivion drown'd)
That come what may while life's glad pulses roll,
Indissolubly thus should soul be knit to soul*

----- Campbell

*For Robin Hood disguised himself,
And from the wood is gone.
Like to a friar Robin Hood,
Was accoutred in array;
With hood, gown, beads, and crucifix,
He passed upon the way.
He had not gone past miles two or three,
But it was his chance to espy
Two lusty priests.*

----- Robin Hood's Golden Prize

*The sheriff he saddled his good palfrey,
And took three hundred pounds in gold;
And away he went with bold Robin Hood,
His horned beasts to behold
Then Robin he brought him through the wood,
And set him on his dapple grey;
O have me commended to your wife at home.
So Robin went laughing away.*

----- Robin Hood and the Butchers

*Says John, if I must a-begging go,
I'll have a palmer's weed;
With a staff and coat, and bags of all sorts,
The better then shall I speed.
Then he got out of the beggar's cloak
Three hundred pounds in gold;
Good fortune had I, said Little John,
Such a sight for to behold.
But found he in the beggar's bag,
Three hundred pounds and three.*

----- Little John and the Four Beggars

"I wonder how my Lord Bishop of Hereford finds his head this morning?" said Will Scarlet, as he, accompanied by Little John and Much, was proceeding, after fulfilling their morning duties, with them to

Barnsdale Hall, to make arrangements for the two weddings about to take place.

"It must ache sadly," returned Much. "Though, judging by the quantity he takes, and comparatively the light effect it takes upon him, I should imagine he is well used to it, and probably rises without being any the worse for it."

"I don't know what you call light effect, Much" said Will Scarlet, laughing, "But for a light effect, I never saw a man more drunk."

"Truly; but you never saw a man drink so much without becoming utterly insensible. Therefore, I think it must be from long use," argued Much.

"It is long use," chimed in Little John; "They are all of a sort, those churchmen; guzzling, gorging, rapacious, evil-minded, uncharitable rogues."

"You like them as little as Robin Hood," said Much. "Why does he bear them such an inveterate hatred?"

"He has good cause," replied Little John; "He is kept out of name, title, wealth, and honour through one of them; and he is forever hearing some evil report concerning their grasping, avaricious wickedness."

"And does he serve them all thus, when he gets them in his power?" he asked.

"Aye, without exception. He will even go out of his way to get them in his power," returned Little John.

"How do you mean 'go out of his way?'" inquired Much.

"Why, I'll tell you a story about him, and that will explain my meaning," replied Little John.

"He ascertained one morning that a couple of black friars were conveying a large sum of money to their convent, and were to pass through a part of Sherwood Forest. Directly he knew of this – our funds were rather low at the time – he resolved to get it from them, without troubling any of the band to assist him, or making any fuss at all about it. Well, he disguised himself in a habit of Tuck's, hood, gown, beads, crucifix, and all, and started forth to meet them. He had not got very far before he espied two lusty priests, mounted on mettlesome nags, come riding along at rather a brisk pace."

"He placed himself in the road way, and when they reached him, he caught the bridles of both nags, and said in as piteous, whining, and miserable a tone as he could assume, and as he thought the character demanded, he said — '*Benedicité*, holy brethren! How happy am I to have fallen in with thee. How fortunate; how much I have to be thankful for!"

“‘Why speak you thus?’ demanded one of the friars. ‘Because,’ replied Robin, ‘I know you will take pity upon me – that you will spare me a moiety of your provisions, for I am starving.’”

“‘We have none,’ said he who had spoken before, and attempting, as soon as he found it was a begging petition, to spur the nag into a trot, but Robin held them firmly.”

“‘Then spare me a groat to buy some with,’ he said, ‘For I am weary and fasting. I have wandered about all yesterday and this morning without so much as a cup to drink or a bit of bread to eat; therefore, good brothers, for our dear Lady’s sake, spare me a groat.’”

“‘Out upon thee! let go my bridle, fool. Begone! We want none of thy cant, we know what it means.’”

“‘Yes.’ said the other friar; ‘We want none of thy cant, we know what it means. Let go the bridle.’”

“‘But will you not spare me a groat?’ asked Robin, still keeping the bridles firmly in his hand.”

“‘I have not a penny, by our Holy Dame, if I felt inclined to give it,’ said the first friar.”

“‘You look not as if you were without money – well mounted, well attired, and happy faces,’ urged Robin.”

“‘Oh yes, but we have been robbed this morning,’ replied the friar; ‘Could save nothing – we have not a penny left.’”

“‘Yes,’ cried the other, ‘We have been robbed, and have not a penny left. Leave go the bridle, beggar.’”

“‘I am very much afraid,’ said Robin Hood, ‘that you are telling me a very great lie.’”

“‘A lie?’ said the first friar, who was a fat, burly old fellow; ‘Graceless dog! What mean you by that?’”

“‘Simply what I say,’ replied Robin, ‘That you’re telling a lie. I do not believe that you were robbed, neither do I believe that you have no money about you. And as there is nothing like being satisfied on such points, before you go from hence, I will just see whether it is so or no.’”

“‘With that he left go of the bridles and laid his hand upon the saddlebag of the fat friar, but he put spurs to his horse and went off at a good speed, followed closely by his brother friar. Robin, however, was too nimble for them, and overtook them, and very quickly unhorsed them both. They were in a horrible state of fright their teeth chattered, and their eyes rolled about dreadfully.’”

“‘Good mendicant, spare us!’ gasped the fat friar. ‘Have pity on us! We have neither money nor provisions to bestow upon thee. Thou canst not have what we have not to give thee.’”

“‘No,’ cried the other, a poor lean devil, ‘Have pity on us! We cannot give thee what we have not.’”

“‘I do not require it of thee,’ replied Robin. ‘You say ye have no money. I have no money. Well, suppose we all three kneel down and pray until we get some. Our dear lady has never failed me in my hour of need, and I do not think she will now. I prayed to her just before I met with you, so I am sure I shall meet with relief through you. Therefore, if we all kneel down, I have no doubt we shall get some speedily.’”

“The two friars refused to kneel at first, until awed by Robin’s menaces, and more by his saying that if they refused to do so he should believe that they had money, but refused to give him any. And if he thought that for a moment, he would act in a way that would make them wish they had freely rendered up to him whatever they might have had about them. They could not exactly gainsay what he said, so down they knelt alongside of Robin, who set them the example.”

“What, all three,” interrogated Will Scarlet, “Kneeling down to pray for money?”

“Yes,” replied Little John, “Praying away as hard as they could.”

“Ha, ha, ha! What a sight it must have been,” laughed Will; “It must have beat the Bishop of Hereford’s dance in his boots.”

“Well, they prayed away, hard and fast,” continued Little John, “Robin keeping them at it.”

“‘Send us, oh send us money,’ they cried, ‘to serve us in our need!’ But no money came. Their voices were miserably mournful, and they drawled out prayer after prayer until Robin fairly laughed, as he declares, until his eyes ran down with water. A short prayer served him, and he stood over them flourishing a quarter staff, asking them occasionally if they had got any money, and on receiving a negative reply, he commenced singing a ballad. They wrung their hands, they wept, they tore their hair, and appeared to be overwhelmed with grief. Still to Robin’s repeated questions if any money had come, they cried ‘no’, and begged hard and earnestly of him to let them go, but he was deaf to their entreaties.”

“‘The Holy Mother never fails me,’ he said; ‘If I have none now I shall by-and-bye, so go on and pray more heartily than ever.’”

“They groaned and whined at last in such a miserable manner that Robin grew tired of it, and so, after they had been on their knees near an hour, he said to them: ‘Now, my dear brethren, let us see what money heaven hath sent us.’”

“‘Not a penny,’ cried the fat friar.”

“‘Not a penny!’ quoth Robin; ‘How know I that? My good brothers, can you tell if I have money or no, although I say I have none?’”

“‘No,’ replied the friar.”

“‘No, to be sure,’ he said, unless you search me. Therefore, how know I whether Heaven has sent you any money until I search you?’”

“They both groaned in concert, and with one voice exclaimed they had not a penny.”

“‘We shall see,’ replied Robin. ‘Whatever money Heaven has sent us, we will share, unless we have either of us told the other a lie, and had money when we said we had not. You are sure that neither of you have any money?’”

“‘Quite sure,’ they cried together.”

“‘Very well: now search and tell me if you have.’”

“They did so. They put their hands into their pockets, but could not find any.”

“‘Now one more prayer to our Lady,’ said Robin Hood, ‘and then to business.’”

“Awed by his staff, they consented. And again they put up an earnest prayer adapted to the purpose and when they had concluded, Robin said to the fat friar —”

“‘We’ll search each other one by one. I will begin with you, my bonny father.’”

“After some little resistance they were both searched by him, horses and all, and he managed to find five hundred pieces of gold.”

“‘Hast thou none, mendicant?’ exclaimed the friar, when Robin had got all their store.”

“‘None but what thou seest here,’ he returned, pointing to the money he had taken from them. If you doubt it you are free to search me.’”

“This they declined to do, with the best grace their fear would let them; but the fat friar asked him if he was going to share the gold he had.”

“‘Do you believe it came direct from Heaven, since I have been with you?’ he asked, gazing at him sternly.”

“The frightened monk looked dumb-founded, he had not a word to say; his silence continuing, Robin said – ‘You lied to me. You had the money when you vowed and protested that you had it not. You have forfeited, therefore, all right to it, but I will be more charitable to you than you were to me I will give you fifty pieces each, because you prayed so heartily and earnestly, and fairly earned it.’”

“‘You are very good,’ moaned the friar, sighing and letting the large tears trickle down his cheeks in agony at the loss of his money. ‘Now, I suppose, we may go?’”

“‘Not yet,’ said Robin Hood, ‘You must stay with me a little while. I wish to swear you upon this holy grass of Sherwood to observe certain conditions, and I would have you do it before witnesses.’”

“‘Who art thou?’ inquired the friar, in an almost inaudible tone.”

“‘That you shall know speedily,’ replied Robin stripping off his friar’s gown, beads, and crucifix, and flinging them over one of the nag’s backs. Gathering up the money, he also put that in a saddlebag, and led the way deeper into the forest.”

“I don’t believe he had got far when he met with me and George-a-Green. We had killed a buck, which we had run down, and were resting after our labour. As he came up, Robin pointed to me, and said to the monk – ‘These are my two witnesses, before whom you must swear your oath.’”

“‘Who are these, Robin Hood?’ I asked. ‘You should have seen the start they gave when I mentioned his name. The fat fellow began telling his beads, and the lean one stared over the nag’s head at Robin, as if he was looking upon the devil himself. If we had been going to hang, drown, quarter, roast, and eat them, they could not have looked more fear-stricken than when they discovered that our leader had them in his power. They expected nothing less than death, and they repeated their *Ave Marias*, *Paternosters*, and *credos*, as fast as their tongues could wag, licking up as great a clack as if two women were together by the ears, pulling and clawing.”

“Robin, however, stopped their din, and made them down on their knees, and swear to the same oath administered to the Bishop of Hereford yesterday, that they should tell no lies, tempt no women to sin, and be charitable to the poor. I think if he had proposed to them to go and pull the Pope’s nose, and bite his great toe off, they would have sworn to have done it, so readily did they swear to do whatever he proposed. And when he told them they were free to go, it was a merry sight to see them leap into the saddle, and gallop away as fast as their two nags could carry them. We had a hearty laugh over it and the story served to amuse the band for some time.”

“It was a merrie affair, truly,” said Much, when Little John had concluded. “Robin Hood must have managed his disguise very well, for the friars not to have detected him at first. But I suppose they did have a misgiving from their fear of him?”

"No, I think not," returned Little John, musingly. "They are such a thievish set, they rob so much, that I suppose whenever they meet accidentally, the strongest robs the other; that I am sure must have been the cause of their fear, not because they suspected Robin was not a monk – he is wondrously expert in disguises, as you might have seen by his aping the old woman. I could tell you a hundred freaks of his where he has disguised himself, and never been discovered until he discovered himself. That was a famous trick he played Baron Fitz Alwine's deputy, when he acted as High Sheriff during the Baron's absence."

"Yes," laughed Much, "That got noised abroad in style. Everybody laughed at the sheriff, and applauded Robin Hood for his daring, his good nature, and the successful manner in which he deceived the sheriff."

"What was that?" asked Will Scarlet, "I never heard of that."

"What!" cried Little John, "Not about Robin disguising himself as a butcher?"

"As a butcher!" exclaimed Will, in surprise; "No, certainly, I have heard nothing about that."

"Oh, then, I'll tell you," replied Little John. "About four years since, meat was very scarce, and the butchers sold it very dearly. The consequence was that the poor people were unable to buy it, and they were all nearly starving; The butchers kept up their prices, and nobody but the rich people could buy, and the butchers began to make good round sums by their cattle. Well, this came to Robin's ears, for he knows instantly of the wants and sufferings of the poor around, and he resolved to try and remedy the evil. One market morning a butcher was proceeding through Sherwood, upon the back of a fine blood mare, taking a very large drove of horned cattle to market. Robin met him; made a bargain, purchased his stock, mare and all, and made him lend his dress, and we were ordered to keep him in our custody until Robin returned."

"So he started on to the market, disguised as a butcher, upon the mare, and driving his cattle before him. Upon reflection, he expected that, as he intend-ed to sell the meat after a fashion of his own, that the butchers might unite, cause a disturbance, and frustrate all his efforts to benefit the poor. It so happened that the deputy sheriff kept a large hostel, where all the butchers put up at when they came to Nottingham, saving those who dwelt in the town. Well, the better to prevent anything of this nature, after driving the cattle into the market place, he singled out the fattest of the herd and drove it up to the sheriff's hostel. The sheriff was standing at the door when he arrived, and fell into a fit of admiration on seeing the bullock Robin was driving, and expressed it in round terms. Robin then told him that he was but a young butcher, that he had the largest drove in the market, and begged his acceptance of that beast.

At the same time, asked his assistance, as sheriff, if the butchers should attempt to prevent him selling his cattle. The sheriff joyfully accepted the present, vowed he'd hang every butcher that dared to interfere with him, swore he was a fine young fellow, and would make the best and handsomest butcher that ever sold meat."

"Robin gaining his point thus, returned to the market place, and when the sale commenced, a crowd of poor people came round to see if meat was lowered in price, but they found it was as dear as ever, until Robin Hood, on finding the prices, offered as much meat for a penny as the butchers did for three. This soon became known over the town, and he sold his meat so fast he hardly knew how to take the money. To those who appeared rich, or well able to afford to purchase meat at the butcher's prices, he would not sell an ounce, but to those to whom money was a great object, he sold it freely. And when the butchers began to grow outrageous, to find that he was selling all his meat and theirs was not moving off at all, and began to abuse him, he made his price still lower, and sold for a penny as much as they asked five for. But when it got known that he would not sell to the rich and only to the poor, they began to think better of him, and thought him some prodigal who was selling off his cattle in a freakish fit of benevolence. And they found, too, their trade was not injured, for those only who could not afford to buy of them, bought of Robin. They, therefore, ceased their abusive language, and actually when very poor people came to them, although they would not sell themselves, they directed them to Robin, who would, and also gave away a quantity to the very poorest."

"His motives soon got known, and he was hailed and cheered on all sides; the butchers themselves at last sought his acquaintance, and after conferring together, one of their number stepped up to him and said – 'Jolly friend and brother, your conduct has been strange today, but your motive is good; and, therefore, though our trade may be injured by you, yet, in consideration of your intention, we cannot but applaud your behavior. So my brethren think, as we are all of a trade, we cannot do better than to dine together up at the sheriff's today.'"

"'With all my heart!' said Robin, merrily. 'Accursed be he who would refuse an invitation so frankly, so honestly, and kindly accorded. I'll go with ye, my brethren true, as soon, and as fast as you list.' The butchers cheered him for so cordially accepting their invitation, and they prepared to go up to the sheriff's house to spend a jovial afternoon."

"You know all the incidents uncommonly well," interrupted Much; "I never heard half so much before. Were you there?"

"To be sure I was, although Robin commanded me to stay behind, yet I was not going to let him risk his life without being near at hand. As I tried

my hand at a disguise, and when I got near him he knew me in a moment, and shook his head angrily at me for breaking his orders, but when I told him why I had come, he smiled in that pleasant, good-natured way he has, and squeezing my hand, thanked me, and bade me never to mind his harsh words, and to take care of myself. I mixed with the crowd, and so saw everything that took place.”

“I should have liked no much to have been with you,” said Will Scarlet, his eyes sparkling at the mere anticipation of such a thing.

“Ah! you would, Will,” remarked Little John; “It was a rare day, I can assure you.”

“Well, go on, let us hear it all,” cried Will, anxiously.

“You shall, every bit of it,” replied Little John, “When we reached the sheriff’s house we went into the hall, and sat down to a good dinner. Robin was placed at the head of the table, and nothing would do but they would have him say grace. He was in one of his merry humours, so he cried out — ‘You shall have a grace. God bless us all here. The Holy Mother bless the meat we are about to eat, and the cup of sack we shall take after it, provided it is good enough to nourish our blood, and so ends my grace.’”

“The butchers laughed, and fell to at their dinner in right good earnest. And when they had all finished, the wine went flowing round, Robin exhorting them to drink and be merry, vowing that whatever the cost of the reckoning might be, he would pay for it all. The butchers were delighted. They drank and sung and enjoyed themselves in the highest degree, roaring, shouting, laughing, and drinking, until they began to have a doubt what relationship they bore their father. The sheriff, in the height of their jollity, came in, and they made him sit down and drink with them. He began asking about Robin, seeing that he was king of the feast.”

“‘He is a mad blade! A rare blade! A choice spirit!’ cried the butchers. The sheriff turned to me, seeing me more sober than the others, and began to question me.”

“‘This must be some prodigal,’ he said, ‘who, having sold houses, lands, and cattle, means to spend all the money thus easily gained.’”

“It is very likely,” I said, “scarce knowing what to reply.”

“‘Perhaps he has still something to dispose of, and might be induced to sell whatever he has very cheaply.’”

“Very likely,” I answered, “You had better ask him.”

“He went close up to Robin, and, after lauding his liberality, praising him for the noble way in which he spent his money, equal to the wealthiest cavalier, he asked him if he had any horned cattle to dispose of,

persuading him that it was beneath the blood of noble youth like him to keep cattle. Robin laughed within himself as he heard and detected the cunning proposition, and said he had between five hundred and a thousand, which he would dispose of for five hundred golden merks."

"I will give you three hundred,' said the sheriff, 'if I like them. If not, it is no bargain.'"

"It is no bargain yet,' said Robin, laughing. 'As butchers are charging now, they are worth a merk or two merks a head such mine, at least'."

"I will give you three hundred golden merks down if you will sell them me. Consider, my gallant youth three hundred golden merks are better in thy purse than a thousand head of cattle in thy pastures. Come shall we say three hundred?' urged the sheriff."

"It is too little,' persisted Robin Hood, laughing slyly at me."

"Not to a liberal heart like thine' continued the sheriff, growing more urgent. 'Come, it is a bargain; say yes. – There, that's right. Where are they that I may see them at once?'"

"At once?' said Robin, in surprise."

"Aye,' he replied, 'If it is not very far, we can ride over and conclude our bargain on the spot. I will take the money with me, and if I like the cattle which I am sure I shall, I will pay you then and there, and you can come back and finish the night with your friends.'"

"Oh, it is not far," said Robin, laughing to see how completely the sheriff in trying to buy the cattle was selling himself. 'A short ride from here I have several hundred acres of land, and you may see some of my horned cattle grazing on them.'"

"Not far from here!' echoed the sheriff; 'Several hundred acres of land – why where can it be?'"

"Hush!' whispered Robin; 'it would not be so well to mention it here, for private reasons – you understand, eh?'"

"Oh – yes perfectly,' nodded the sheriff with a knowing wink; 'Friends, family? – Eh I know,'"

"Yes,' replied Robin, with affected mystery, 'It is just across the forest – I am ready, if you are.'"

"Oh! quite,' said the sheriff eagerly. 'I will order our steeds to be saddled directly, and we will away, without delay. You can easily tell your friends here that we shall return.'"

"Oh, certainly, replied Robin. The sheriff went to get his money, and see that the steeds were saddled, and, by Robin's wish, I hastened to the wood to get the merrie men, whom I had, in case of an emergency,

placed within ear-shot of the bugle, in readiness to receive the sheriff, who was coming to behold Robin Hood's horned cattle. I had not been long gone, as Robin has since told me, when the sheriff called him into his private apartment, and told him the steeds were saddled, and that he had now but to get the money, and they would then start. He bade him sit down a moment or two, and introduced him to his young wife, a pretty, lively little lass, and Robin passed the moments of his absence very agreeably, I suppose, for when the sheriff came he caught them kissing. He did not like that at all, but his hope of cheating Robin made him swallow his rancor, and though he looked grave, not to express much anger. He said he was quite ready to depart, and now only waited for Robin, who, with a readiness that I don't understand, bid the little pretty wife goodby, and kissed her again, she nothing loath, before her husband's face. He was much scandalized at this, and after bestowing a furious look upon her, dragged Robin Hood by the arm from the room. They mounted their steeds, and were soon in the forest, Robin leading him through the loneliest places to the spot where we were to meet. He dropped innuendoes, which rather startled the sheriff, for as they rode along, he said – 'These are part of my acres of land.'

"'Thine! That's impossible,' said the sheriff; 'This wood and all in it belongs to the king.'"

"'That may be,' replied Robin; 'But I make it mine.'"

"'Thine! How?' inquired the sheriff, with astonishment."

"'Oh! You shall see anon,' replied Robin."

"'This is a lonely, dreary place,' said the sheriff, 'and grievously infested with outlaws. God keep us from falling in with that desperate villain, Robin Hood! He would speedily strip us of all we possess, and send us home penniless.'"

"'We shall see whether he will or no, for it is most like that you will fall in with him,' said Robin, with a laugh that the sheriff did not seem to approve; Altogether he was growing uneasy."

"'I wish your estate laid some other way' he said, 'or that there was some other way of approaching it.'"

"'There are many ways of approaching it,' replied Robin, 'but I tell you we are upon it now. This is a part of several hundred acres which I call mine.'"

"'Which you call yours! What do you mean by calling yours? Is it yours only?' inquired the sheriff, anxiously."

"'What should I mean by calling, but that I call it mine? You call your wife yours,' said Robin, with a laugh."

“And so she is mine,’ returned the sheriff, with a disagreeable doubt pervading the tone of his voice.”

“And yours only and so are these mine, and mine only,’ replied Robin.”

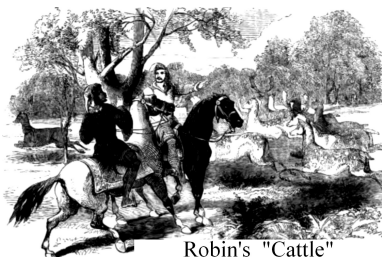
“Pray what is your name?’ asked the sheriff, growing more uneasy than ever.”

“That you shall know anon also’, said Robin, with a chuckle which the sheriff did not like.”

“Immediately subsequent to this, an extensive herd of deer passed quickly by at a short distance from them.”

“There! there! look, Master Sheriff!’ cried Robin Hood; ‘There are at least a hundred of my fat horned cattle! They are fair and fat to see – how like you them?’”

“Ha, ha, ha!” laughed Will Scarlet, interrupting Little John; “I guessed as much. Ho, ho, ha! a rare trick, truly.”



“Ay,” continued Little John, “and so the sheriff thought; for he turned at once to Robin and said – ‘I wish I had not come – I don’t like this place – I wish I were gone away from it.’”

“Why?’ asked Robin, slapping him on the shoulder. ‘It is a goodly dwelling place, I can tell thee man. Besides, am I not with thee?’”

“That’s exactly it. To tell thee the plain truth, good fellow, I do not exactly like thy company’ exclaimed the sheriff, scarce knowing, from anxiety and apprehension, what he said.”

“Not like my company’ responded Robin. ‘Beshrew me, there are not many who say that. But thou art one of the few and I suppose art difficult to please. Nevertheless, thou shalt not go away without having the choice of meeting with someone who may please thee – so thou shalt have a choice.’”

“With that he put his horn to his mouth, and blew the summons, and we who had dogged their steps for some distance, were at his side ere he had blown the third peal.”

“What is your will, noble master?” I exclaimed, upon reaching him; “Pray tell me, and it shall be done.”

“As you always say,” interrupted Will Scarlet, with a laugh.

“And as I ought to say,” observed Little John, good-naturedly.

“Why,’ he replied; ‘I have brought the High Sheriff of Nottingham to look at some of my horned cattle, and to take a snack for supper with me. See that he is treated as becomes my guest and his rank.’”

"He shall have the best our hostel affords," I responded, "For I know that he will pay well for what he has."

"Pay!" ejaculated the sheriff. "What do you mean by pay?"

"How full of questions you are, Master Sheriff," remarked Robin. "Let me answer you now the questions I deferred a short time ago. You asked me my name – it is Robin Hood."

"I thought so," murmured the sheriff."

"And now you may guess how I make these acres of land mine. With respect to what we mean by pay, we keep open and free entertainment to the poor. To those who can afford to pay for their entertainment, we give nothing, and make them pay for what they have."

"What are your charges?" asked the sheriff, moaningly."

"We have no charges – we affix no prices. We take every coin our rich guest has. You have three hundred, and that is what your entertainment will cost you. Therefore, I would advise you to eat as much as you can, and drink as much as you can, in order that you may not pay your money without having anything in return for it."

"But, although we placed a good meal before him, the sheriff had no appetite. He tasted but little, but drank considerably – I suppose to keep his courage up. He gave up his three hundred golden merks with the best grace he could assume, and expressing a great desire to go, he was mounted carefully on his horse, and conducted to the borders of the forest. As he quitted us, Robin bade him good night, and desired him to commend him to his wife at home, at which the sheriff made no reply, but thumped his forehead with his fist as he rode away. So ended Robin Hood's adventure with the butchers and the Sheriff of Nottingham."

"That must have been rare fun," said Will Scarlet when Little John had concluded his story. "I should liked to have seen it all. Did Robin well affect the butcher?"

"As far as dress went, but there was something in his manner betokening gentle blood, which he could not disguise, and it was detected by the fraternity. That was the reason why they believed he was a prodigal. But his person was so well disguised, that unless you had known him to have the disguise, you could not have told it was Robin Hood who confronted you when he stood before you. Many in Nottingham, who knew him in his natural character well, did not recognise him in his assumed one."

"I should like to try my hand at a disguise vastly," cried Will. "I think I could do it very well. At least that is my opinion. Did you ever try, Little John?"

“Yes,” he answered, “I once had a trial at it, by Robin’s desire.”

“And how did you succeed?” asked Will, with an air of interest.

“Oh, pretty well, for that matter,” said Little John. “It arose from a strange circumstance. Robin took it in his head one morning, as he was going to visit Halbert Lindsay and his pretty wife, Grace, that he would disguise himself as a Norman cavalier, and pay the Sheriff of Nottingham a visit – this was after he had the affair with him as a butcher – and accordingly he went. Well, he spent the greater part of the day there in mirth and jollity — flirted with the sheriff’s wife, until the poor devil was ready to gnaw his fingers to the bone, or beat his mother. And when he thought he had staid long enough, he came away, whispering in the sheriff’s ear ‘many thanks for his handsome entertainment to Robin Hood.’”

“Before the man could recover his surprise, he was away in full speed for the wood. He told me all the incidents that transpired, and we had much laughter over them. I expressed my surprise at his being able so to alter his natural character, as to be able to deceive those who had been in his company before, long enough to know his face and form well.”

“And I repeated that we all had our certain abilities, which we shone in — one man was more expert at one weapon than another, and, again, that one had some gift which the other did not possess, and so on. And that, I believed, was the reason why he was so happy in what he undertook, for I did not believe he would try anything that he thought he could not accomplish. He laughed, and said I was partly right, but not quite.”

“For that if a man tried hard to attain an art for which, perhaps, he might not have a natural ability, yet he believed that earnest perseverance would go far to make up the deficiency which nature had failed to supply; and, to see what could be done by one who had made no essay in an attempt of the nature I had been praising his effort in, he resolved that I should disguise myself, and seek an adventure.”

“The choice of a disguise was left to myself, and, having heard that a rich Norman had died in the neighbourhood of Nottingham, and, in consequence, alms were to be given to the poor, and a grand interment to take place, I determined to make that place my scene of action, and therefore disguised myself as a mendicant painter.”

“I had an old hat with a cockle shell, a staff, a palmer’s coat, and a bag for my bread, another for my cheese, and one for any money I might be fortunate enough to get. I made my dress look as wretched and forlorn as I could, and I set out with a light heart and a merrie cheer from the merrie men.”

"In my way I passed several beggars, with their empty srips, wending their way to the place for which I was bound. I watched their actions narrowly, and tried to imitate them – I fancy with tolerable success. For, albeit, some of the miserable rogues stared very hard at me, they did not seem to take me for other than I appeared. I walked on, and after passing several, I met with no more for some distance. At length I overtook four stout fellows. One seemed blind, another lame, and the other two had nothing ailing them but dirtiness and filthy rags. I overtook them. Here's brave company, I thought. I may perhaps gain something from these fellows, so I will accost them, and see how much of their trade I can learn in a few questions."

"Good morrow, brethren!' I exclaimed. 'I am fortunate in meeting with you. Which way do you go? You will, perhaps, be good enough to tell me. I hope it is my way, for I want company sadly. I have walked for some time alone.'"

"This way,' grunted one of the fellows, in a gruff voice and a rude manner, and all of them stared at me as if they had seen a turret of Linton Abbey taking a walk in the forest after breakfast. I had heard the abbey bell tolling dolefully, and not liking the looks or 'haviour of these ragged rips, I said, in a tone of voice not a whit more pleasant than his who had addressed me –"

"What is here to do that I see so many of our tattered fraternity stumping in this direction, eh? Why are the bells ringing in this miserable manner? Is there a dog to be hung for stealing a dinner his master refused to give him? Is there a bull dead through having caught a cold in his horns? Is there a Norman found honest, a churchman discovered to be good and virtuous, a rich man charitable, or one of your vagabond brothers set in the stocks?"

"No!' said one of them to me, with a sneer, 'There is a Norman dead near here, and things to be distributed to such as us who need them — perhaps a scrap of cheese, ten crumbs of bread, or the eighteenth part of the seventh of a penny — perhaps not so much. Will you like to come and share it with us?"

"Anything but your friendship, or your virtues,'" I answered. "Of the first, it might get my neck into danger; and the second, you have not an atom to spare, having so little for yourselves."

"You try hard to be witty this morning, you greasy pole,' cried the lustiest among them, a big fellow, armed with a stout staff, 'But we do not feel disposed to be the subjects of your scurvy jests. Now let me tell you something which is meant in earnest: we have many brethren in London, in Coventry, in Berwick, in Dover, and in all parts of this country. I have been with them all in all their resorts, but I never clapped my eyes upon

so crooked, so ill-favoured, ungainly, cut-throat-looking a cur as thou. Thy company disgraces us, so take that crack of the crown, loon, and keep thee back from us.”

“With that he let at me a blow upon the skull with such a twang you might have heard it at the trysting tree, a good three miles from hence.”

“That was rather too hard, more than you could bear quietly, of course,” laughed Will Scarlet.



Little John and The Four Beggars

“Yes,” returned Little John, smiling, “I don’t like to boast of my capabilities, but there are few, I know, who can compete with me at the quarter staff. The rogue made me angry, he hit me very hard, but I twirled his staff from his grasp at one blow, and fell upon him so soundly, that he laid down and roared for mercy, which I granted him when my arm ached.”

“What must his sides have done!” exclaimed Much. “I know the weight of your staff, having felt it.”

“Why, I fancy he laid very uneasily for some time after,” said Little John. “When I was satisfied with him, I determined not to let the others off easily, for I had a mighty shrewd guess that those two

gentry who appeared blind and lame were only feigning those afflictions.”

“Now, you filthy dogs,” I cried, “I shall not keep me back from ye, but I’ll have a bout all round with ye — since ye are so full of blows and foul words, ye shall have your fill of them.” But none of them would oppose me single-handed, therefore I vowed they should all four.”

“And as they were all armed, there was no unfair play in it. I laid about me stoutly, you would have laughed heartily, Will, if you had seen the blind man open his eyes, and stare at me when I gave him a knock, and the leap the lame man performed, on aiming a blow at his shins. I got before them — I kept them together, as a drover does his cattle — and never were four rogues more stoutly handled than were these four beggars.”

“As I gave one a whack over his leg, his wallet fell from his side with the skip he gave, and out rolled a quantity of gold pieces.”

“Oh, ho!” cried I, “This alters the face of things.”

‘Now, rascals, unless you each give up every penny you have, you shall be beaten by me to a jelly,’ and I worked hard to fulfill my promise. The knaves roared for mercy, and none granted I, until they swore to comply with my demand. When I left off, they were all so sore, they could scarce lift a limb, and I found no difficulty in clearing their garments of their gold – though, beshrew me, it was a filthy task. However, I filled my bag with their merks, and left them to pursue their way as best they might. I returned to Robin Hood, thinking my adventure in a disguise quite sufficient to be satisfied with and when I neared the trysting tree, I saw Robin Hood and the merrie men practicing with the bow at willow wands. As soon as he observed me, he called out – ‘What, Little John, so soon returned – what success? Have you failed, or have you no heart to proceed? Out with your news!’”

“I have no news but good news,” I replied. “I have found this disguise as fortunate to me, as you yours with the Sheriff of Nottingham.”

“‘Fortunate!’ echoed he. “Why, how have you sped with your beggar’s trade? I long to hear and see some proofs of your success.”

“You shall,” said I, exposing my wallet. “Here are six hundred and three golden merks, which I have taken from members of the begging tribe.”

“Robin instantly looked serious. ‘What mean you! Taken mail from the poor beggars! Little John, I hope it is not so?’”

“I then up and told him the whole affair, and how I was sure these were rascals by trade, who robbed and stole whenever they had a chance and though having plenty of money, would beg and moan to obtain alms, which ought more justly to be applied to those who needed it. I compared them to the priests who wrung the hard-earned money from the poor, for your poor people give more to their poorer brethren than the rich, because they can sympathise with their poverty, and your rich people cannot understand it. And as we levied contributions upon the priests, because they were extortioners from the poor, so, upon the same principle, I told him I took the merks from these rogues, who were extortioners by trade.”

“And what said he?” asked Will, eagerly.

“Why, he laughed at my view of the matter, and said it was a good one; he told me he should call me the forest philosopher, for I found a reason and an argument to defend all my acts. I told him we should all be able to do so, for it was not proper or manly in a man to do anything he could not defend. He said I was right and we had a right jovial afternoon after it, none of us the less pleased that such an addition had been made to our funds.”

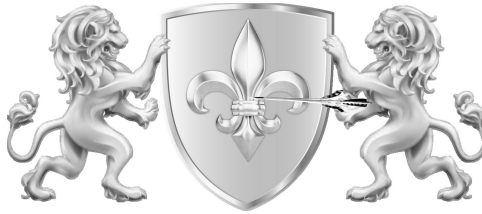
"I see, Little John, you have tried your hand at most things," said Will Scarlet.

"At a great many," replied he, "And have no reason to be ashamed of my success."

"And now you are about to try one more," laughed Will, "And that's matrimony. I hope you will be as successful in that as you have in all other things."

"I hope I shall," returned Little John, earnestly, "And I have not a doubt of it."

As these words passed his lips, they reached Barnsdale Hall and entered the house together.



Chapter 4

Viola *You are fair.*

*My lord and master loves you; oh, such love
Could be but recompensed, though you were crowned
The nonpareil of beauty!*

Olivia *How does he love me?*

Viola *With adorations.*

----- Shakespeare

*A course of small quiet attentions, not so pointed as to alarm,
nor so vague as to be misunderstood, with now and then a look
of kindness, and little or nothing said upon it, leaves nature for
your mistress, and she fashions it to her own mind*

----- Sterne

*Over the light blue hills,
There came a noise of revellers*

* * * *

*Like to a moving vintage down they came,
Crowned with green leaves and faces all on flame;
All madly dancing through the pleasant valley.*

----- John Keats

Will Scarlet had taken upon himself to name the wedding day, when the consent of his parents was obtained to the marriage of Little John and Winifred, Much and Barbara. And opposed to anything in the shape of delay, he had at first named the second day from the one upon which the soft confessions were made, for the agreeable ceremony to take place.

He was, however, instantly overruled by the ladies, who protested that no one could get decently married at so short a notice. Will contended that half an hour, or less, would have sufficed him, if opportunity had served, to marry Maude, and he did not see why they should not be contented with two days. He said he hated to be put off in any way when there was no actual necessity for it, but a mere regard for appearances. He had been a sufferer by delays, and it was his advice that whatever was wished done, particularly marriage, the best and surest way to accomplish it was to do it directly it was in our power. And that if we lost the chance through our own false delicacy, we deserved all the pain and disappointment we were most likely to experience. His reasoning, however, failed to convince the ladies.

There was an established opinion, a rule which they resolved not to break through, and they stoutly maintained their side of the question. Will was very energetic, but he found himself compelled to give way. He named the next day— ‘too soon’ was the reply, and he grew very inquisitive to know what they could possibly want with more than three days. They did not exactly know themselves, and therefore could not very easily give him a satisfactory reply.

But they gave him a woman’s reason for it – *they wanted more time, because they did.*

And to all the ‘whys’ he put to them, that was the ‘*because*’ he received in answer. Finding it was no use to stand out, he named the fourth day. It would not do, the fifth was almost as bad. Then came the sixth, and then the seventh — beyond this he vowed he would not go. The ladies claimed at least a fortnight, and he stoutly resisted it; said it was unnatural – it was against all reason, that a couple who loved each other should wish to wait a fortnight, when they might be married on the morrow. There was something so preposterous in it that he would not consent to it, or even believe that they wished him to do so.

Upon this point he was inflexible, they could not change him. He resolved to name the day, and he determined that it should not extend to a fortnight. After a great deal of arguing, he at length agreed to defer it to the tenth day.

Seven of them had already elapsed, when he, Little John, and Much arrived at the Hall, for the purpose of completing the arrangements, for they intended having a merry day, to compensate for the disappointment which the people around experienced upon the day Will was to have been married there to Maude.

Accordingly, everything which was to have here taken place upon that day, it was intended should be done on the coming wedding day, with such additions as might materially contribute to the gratification of all who were to be present and partakers of the festivity. Every available part of the grounds fronting and at the back of the Hall, was used to make arenas, &c., for the various pastimes and sports, and nothing was forgotten which could by any possible contingency add to the thorough and unalloyed enjoyment of the happy day. Will was the most active of the active.

He had something to do with everything that was done. He was here, there, and everywhere. Had it been his own marriage, he could not have worked with more untiring perseverance than he did. He was unwearied in his exertions to dispose everything so that the day should pass off delightfully. While in the midst of his labours, a thought suddenly struck him. He clapped his hands delightedly together, and gave way to a fit of

laughter that seemed likely to make a blood vessel give way. He recovered his breath only to burst into a succession of these paroxysms, until Robin Hood, who was with him, almost grew alarmed. He shook him, and asked him in a serious tone of voice what induced him to laugh thus violently.

"I'll wager my boy's head to – to the butt of a spear you'll never guess," he said when he recovered his breath.

"It must be something highly amusing, some-thing particularly diverting, to make you laugh in this extraordinary fashion!" exclaimed Robin Hood.

"It is diverting, and so you will say when you hear it," replied Will, indulging in another fit and when he gained a little wind, the tears still trickling down his cheeks from the effects of his excessive mirth, he continued –

"You know that my six brothers are all the same sort of quiet, steady foresters, honest, hearty, and sincere, but nothing about them approaching tender blandishments"

"Well?" said Robin Hood, smiling.

"Well!" exclaimed Will, "I have an idea which will create us a great deal of fun. I have considerable influence with them, and I'll persuade them to marry –"

"To do what?" cried Robin, with astonishment.

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Will. "I guessed how surprised you'd be. Yes! I'll go and collect them all together, and persuade them to get married on the same day that Barby and Winny are. Oh! it will be glorious sport, because they will have, of course, to make love before they can get wedded. You must woo before you marry, and I'll go about with them lovemaking! Ha! ha! ha!—ho! ho! ho! How I shall enjoy it!"

"The thing's impossible," observed Robin, laughing heartily at Will's strange idea. "Your brothers are too sedate, too phlegmatic, to marry. And, besides, even if you persuaded them, there is only three days to woo and wed in."

"So much the better – the shorter the better! Ha! ha! ha! Only fancy Gregory steady, dull-headed, straightforward Gregory — making love! Oh, it's delicious! How came I never to think of it before? Come along, Robin; there is no time to lose. We will seek them out, get them altogether, and I will harangue them."

"Nay, marriage is somewhat too serious a thing to jest upon Will," said Robin; "particularly as, after the jest is carried out, there's no possibility of setting it aside. If there should be anything occur to make any of your brothers unhappy, after being married through your persuasion, your jest will become rather an earnest affair."

"Oh, I'll take care of that. I'll look out their wives for them, and I'll warrant me, I suit them so well, there will be no grumbling afterwards. To start with, I know a pretty little body who is very fond of my brother Herbert. She told me as much, and from what I have seen and know of her, I am sure she will make him a very good wife."

"Has he seen her?" inquired Robin.

"To be sure he has, often; but, poor simple fellow, he knows nothing about it; has no idea that she is a jot fonder of him than me. I have hinted it several times to him, but he does not understand anything about it. I know a lass, too, who will just suit Egbert, and Maude was speaking of somebody who would be the very wife for Harold. So I have good ground to proceed upon, you see." and Will, as he said this, rubbed his hands with every appearance of unmixed delight.

"That makes only three of your number. Who are the other three to have?" observed Robin.

"Oh, I can't exactly say yet; but I shall find them three young girls who will suit them, depend on't," persisted Will.

"But when you have found the three young girls who will suit them," argued Robin, "how know you whether your three brothers will suit them?"

"Oh, you need not fear that," cried Will, "They are three stout-built, well-made, good-looking fellows, for they are not unlike me. And if they are not quite such sprightly lads as young lasses like, still they present something too desirable in their appearance for a reasonable – that is, I mean for any willing girl to refuse accepting them as husbands."

"You are very sanguine," remarked Robin. "Do you really expect to persuade them to marry? Do you seriously imagine your literal brothers can be induced, upon the representations of a brother so much their younger, to make so entire a change in their mode of life?"

"You shall see whether I have not good cause to be sanguine, in a very few minutes, if you will come with me," uttered Will, nodding his head confidently. "Let me see; first, I'll just arrange about the addition of the marrying couples, in order to prevent any confusion, and while I think of it, for in the hurry of doing so many things it may slip my memory."

"But, Will, you know it is the custom in the forest to kill the deer before you cook it, and cook it before you eat it," exclaimed Robin "It is of little use counting gains until you have got them. Suppose you were to see what success you will meet with in your persuasions, before you make preparations for the wedding?"

"Oh, it makes no difference to me," said Will, complacently.

"No," returned Robin, "but it might make all the difference to your brothers, if they did not feel disposed to accede to your wishes; quiet, inoffensive, and good-natured as they are, they might not exactly feel agreeably in being laughed at."

"Lord bless you! They would laugh at it as much as anybody," cried Will, with a perfect satisfaction that he knew their sentiments almost better than they did themselves. "They would think it a capital joke, and so it would be. But to satisfy your scruples, I'll be guided by your wish, and pop the question to them before I pop it to the ladies, and after them, pop it to the fathers and mothers ah, there goes Herbert across the lawn. Hillioh, Herbert! heigh! Here, lad!"

"What want ye, Willy?" said Herbert, stopping.

"Where's Egbert, Harold, Rupert, Stephen, and Hereward?" he asked.

"Practicing with the bow at a fluttering string on a willow wand," he replied. "Hereward has been shooting better today than I ever knew him to do. Come and join us, Willy."

"Not now, Herbert, for I have something more important to do." answered Will; "But do you just run to them all, and bring them here to me. I have something very particular to say to them — be quick."

"What, all of them?" interrogated Herbert.

"Every one of them. I will wait here for them. Away with thee, Herbert, there is little time to spare," said Will, laying his hand upon his brother's shoulder to urge him.

"I am gone, Willy," said Herbert, running off; and soon they heard him calling his brothers at the top of his voice, and shortly he returned with them. They came laughing up to the spot, and when they arrived, the eldest ejaculated —

"What's this, Willy, so particular you have to say to us? What fawn's antlers have you found?"

"I leave all such discoveries to you, Gregory," returned Will, with a laugh.

"Hist!" said Hereward, "He is going to tell us that a shaft tapering from middle to pile and feather, is your only arrow to shoot in the wind's eye with, at a short distance."

"And so it is," said Will, "with a steady hand."

"If you want to hit wide of your mark, by all means," said Robin, quietly, "but for a short distance, and with a wind, I have always found a shaft tapering from the feather make the truest aim."

"Very well, never mind," returned Will, "We have argued the question many times, but I don't think you competent to decide."

"Not Robin Hood?" cried the brothers, with one accord, and instantly burst into a laugh.

"No!" cried Will, energetically, "For he would hit a mark at a hundred yards if he had a willow wand for a bow, and a quarter staff for a shaft. He hits his mark with any arrow. It's only your novice who discovers which is the arrow he shoots best with, and under what circumstances it can be most favourably used. But I did not want you here to talk such a matter as this over with you. It is something which concerns your future welfare and happiness, which induces me to address you."

"Then let's have it, Will, at once," said Gregory, "For I want to get back to the shooting."

"Well then, lads, you all love and honour our father, don't ye?" commenced Will.

"Who dare gainsay it?" said Gregory.

"Nobody that I know of," replied Will. "Or I'd lend them my staff over their ears if they did. Well, that point's settled. He has always done everything which became a man proud of his honour, and a true Saxon."

"To be sure," cried Egbert. "Why, Will, has anyone been speaking foully against him, belying him? By the Mass, if they have, and you point them out, it shall go hard but they are paid with interest for it."

"Oh, if you intend to interrupt me in this way, it will take the whole day to say all I have got to tell you," said Will; "Hear me out before you make any reply," said Will; "Nod when you mean yes, and shake your head when you mean no, and then I shall stand some chance of being listened to attentively, and without interruption."

"Now, here goes again. Our father has done everything worthy of imitation, has he not? That's right. So has our mother? That's right. They have lived happily together. Our father has made our mother happy, and hasn't she made him happy? I should rather think she had. Very well, then, they being married, they have contributed to each other's happiness, have they not? To be sure they have and if they had not married, we should not have been here, that's pretty clear, I think, eh? We have been very happy, considering, haven't we? Well, then, we ought to be very much obliged to them for being married, bringing us into the world, and being the cause of our having received that happiness, you agree to that? Very well, then, as they set you such a good example, don't you think, lads, that the best thing you can do is to get married?"

"Married!" exclaimed the brothers, with the most undisguised astonishment.

"Aye," returned Will, "Married. You can't be better employed at any time, than just the little moment you are putting on the ring, nor happier than afterwards, when you know you have a dear little creature who loves you, and is always doing something to please you and make you comfortable. Look at I and Maude, you rogues, don't you envy us? Of course you do, every minute of the day. Look at Robin and Marian, and even Little John – there's an example for you! He is going to get married, ha, ha, ha! Can you have any scruple after that if he did not think it was not only pleasant, but right and proper, you wouldn't catch him at it. And there's Much, too, in a fever of anxiety and excitement for the ceremony to take place, for fear something might turn up, as in my case, to prevent it."

"Do you want more proofs? If so, I can furnish you them. There's Hal, and his wife Grace, at Nottingham, there's Allan Clare of the Dale, and his beautiful lady. Think of them and then wonder what the deuce you have been about all this while never to have got married, then be ashamed that you have not tried to make some tender, delicate little woman happy. It is every man's duty to try and make women happy. They are gentle, tender things, with nobody to look after their wants and welfare but us, and the only way to do so properly is to marry, and then you have always one you can cherish. That's my view of it, and there isn't one of you can say you ought not to be married, is there? You need not be so long shaking your heads, you can't say that you ought not to be married?"

"To be sure not. Very well, then, I say you ought to be married, and Friar Tuck says the Holy Book tells us we ought, therefore, you have nothing to do but get married at once – so don't say you won't, because you must. Do you hear? I say you must."

"Must!" said Hereward, "There's no must about it. It may be all very well, and very nice, but though it ought to be done, it doesn't follow that a man wants a wife, because he ought to have one. I don't want a wife."

"Don't you? But I know a very pretty little girl that wants a husband. Now, Hereward, a man ought to be married, if it's only to fulfill his duty of making some woman happy. Well, you don't love any particular woman?"

"Yes I do," interrupted Hereward, with a serious look.

"You do! who?" asked Will, with some little surprise.

"Why, mother," returned Hereward, with a look as much as to say,

I would not advise anyone to say I don't.

"Pshaw!" cried Will, laughing, "Of course you reference, venerate, and love mother. I know that. But that is not the love I mean. The love I mean is a feeling which – it's a sensation that comes all over you – a strange, thrilling, heart bumping liking for a female who is – a – not your mother, but oh! She is to you better than all things in the world – nothing can equal her."

"What, not that leash of hounds of Robin's, or his bow, which carries a north country mile and an inch?" asked Gregory, with a chuckle that said very plainly, *that beats her out and out*.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Robin. "Bravo, Gregory, that's a well-levelled shaft. I say, Will, what do you say to that?"

"Why, as he does not exactly know what love is," exclaimed Will, quite staggered at Gregory's remark, "I see it is of no use to explain what love is to him. He must find it out, and he will when he gets married."

"Ay! but I'm not going to get married," said Gregory.

"Aint you?" responded Will, quickly, "You'll see whether you are not, my boy. Look ye, Gregory, can you say a man ought not to get married?"

"Why, no," said Gregory, hesitatingly.

"Ought he to live only for himself?" asked Will, confidently anticipating the reply. But Gregory did not answer, as if he suspected that his reply would be made use of.

Will, with an affectation of indignant astonishment, continued, "Why, you will never tell me, Gregory, you think that a man ought to be so infamously selfish as to wish to live for himself?"

"No, certainly not; but —"

"Very well then he ought to get married. Can any of you deny that conclusion?" asked Will, triumphantly. The brothers shook their heads. "To be sure not," he proceeded, "So you will follow our good examples and get married, and, as some atonement for having lived single so long, you must be married on the same day Barby and Winifred are."

"What, three days hence!" said Egbert, "There isn't time, Willy; where are the wives to come from?"

"There's plenty of time," replied Will, "And I'll find ye wives who shall please ye all."

"But I'm not going to get married," persisted Gregory.

"Why, you can't retract," said Will, earnestly, "You acknowledged a man ought to be married."

"Yes, but we don't always feel inclined to do what we ought. I don't feel inclined to be married," said Gregory.

"I didn't believe any brother of mine was so selfish," uttered Will, as if hurt at the discovery.

"Oh, never mind, Gregory," said Rupert, persuasively. He was one who was contented with everything, took everything as it came, was quiet tempered, and agreeable to whatever was proposed to him, provided there was nothing mean or dishonorable in the proposition.

"Let Will have his own way. If he'll find me a wife, I'll have her. It is of no use making a bother about it. He has set his heart on it, you can see."

"Oh yes," observed Stephen, "I dare say it is as Will says, we ought to be married, and we may as well be so when Barby is married as at any other time."

"I've no objection," chimed in Harold.

"I suppose I must," said Gregory, "You are a devil, Will. You will have your own way. You always would from a baby, and always did."

"And I hope I shall now," returned Will, laughing; "Someday you will be thanking me for having it now."

"We shall see," replied Gregory. "If I am to be married to oblige you, I hope you will get me a nice little wife to oblige me."

"You shall all have good ones, pretty and pleasing," said Will, "or I am no judge of a pretty girl."

"I can save you the trouble," remarked Herbert, quietly, "I have got mine."

"Got yours! Herbert," echoed Will, surprisedly, "How, when, who?"

"Annas Maydew is mine. We had agreed to be married when my sisters were," he answered.

"Why, you sly villain," cried Will, slapping him on the shoulder, "I was hinting to you the other day about her, and you did not say anything to me of this."

"We had not decided then."

"Well, but when I spoke of her, you said nothing to me."

"What should I say? You told me she was very pretty, and very lively, and a good little girl, and would make a good wife. I knew all that, and I said yes. You told me you thought she was fond of me, and that she would have me if I asked her, and several things more. Well, I knew them all, and so did you. Therefore I had nothing to say, of course."

"Oh, but I should have found plenty to have said if I had known all this as you did," said Will. "I fancied there was something of the sort, for I noticed Annas watching him when he was not looking at her, and smiling so pleasantly, and blushing so when he spoke to her, that I asked her if she did not like him, and she said yes; but I never for a moment thought he had been lovemaking, and so never asked if he had. I then proceeded to tell him, thinking I was doing him a service; but he answered me so indifferently, I concluded it was a hopeless case, little imagining my gentleman had been all this while pleading his cause with the young lady. Bravo, Herbert, I admire your spirit and taste. I say, we are the two youngest of the family, and beat the rest hollow."

"Not so fast, Willy," said Harold, "You did not anticipate me in your marriage proposition, for I had already made up my mind to be married. Indeed I had promised Maude I would."

"Oh, you had, eh?" ejaculated Will, "Then Maude has not only looked you out a wife, but got you to promise to marry her."

"Yes," replied Harold, "and now I come to think on't, it must be very pleasant living with a sweet little wife, and I am very glad I consented."

"Well," said Gregory, "since you are all bent on matrimony, I am glad I have consented, for when there's a chase I don't like to be out of the hunt. So Will, hurrah for a wife, boy! A good one and true."

"And you all consent to be married on the same day as our sisters?" asked Will, with sparkling eyes. "Yes," was the reply.

"Hurrah!" cried Will, flinging up his cap.

"Hurrah!" cried the brothers, laughing with great glee.

"I say, Robin," cried Will, "You have the credit of loving the women most truly."

"And so I do," replied he.

"Well, but don't you think I love them as much as you?" inquired Will, looking steadfastly at him.

"I hope you do," he returned, smiling, "for then they have a fast friend in you."

"Now, Will, don't forget us who have not found our own wives," said Egbert, "but be quick and bring us together, because I dare say the girls will like to say something to us before we marry."

"There is not a doubt of that," uttered Will; "Come along with me. I have a choice one for you, Egbert, already in my eye. And I think I know three others who will suit Gregory, Rupert, and Stephen."

"Don't let mine be too old, Will, or too fat," suggested Rupert.

"I'll hit your taste, I warrant me," replied Will. "Come along, lads, it won't take us long to run over to the village, and then I'll introduce you; and those who can't make love for themselves, I'll do it for them."

"It is a pity you can't marry them for us," said Egbert, "You seem so pleased about it."

"Not half so pleased," rejoined Will, "as you will be after you are married. Come along. I say, Robin, I told you I should be successful. You see, I might have made my arrangements – those old proverbs are fudge, all that about cooking meat before you eat it, I don't believe a word of it. Now for the lovemaking, ha! ha! ha!"

And taking the arm of his brother Gregory, for fear he might recede, he led the way, as merry and as happy as anyone could well be, to a little village which was but a short distance from Barnsdale Hall. Leaving Robin to return to the house and communicate the intended addition of six couples to the marriage already about to take place, the brothers went along very jovially, and soon reached the village.

Herbert disengaged himself from the party, and was speedily by the side of his ladye love. Harold, as soon as opportunity served, followed his example. And the four disengaged brothers grew anxious after that to be engaged as early as it could be accomplished. Accordingly, as the nearest lady Will had speculated upon for one of his brothers was the one destined for Elbert, he stopped there, and the lady being at home, he introduced his brother to her.

She was a smiling, pleasing-faced lass, whose kind nature shone out in her looks and words. Will became very eloquent on behalf of his brother, and she honestly confessed she perfectly agreed with him. He then eloquently enlarged upon the good qualities of his brother, quite raising an interest in her for him, and persuading her she could not do better than be married to him, and that if she consented, the sooner she fulfilled her promise the better. After exercising all the persuasive language he was master of, the lady, with a very great deal of blushing at the abrupt declaration made to her, gave every hope that the wishes of Will should be realised, and so he left Egbert to finish what he had so well begun. When they got out of the house, Stephen said –

“I say, Will, I wish I could talk like you.”

“So you might, if you were to try. Nothing is so easy as to talk pleasantly to a female,” observed Will; “It matters not what you say, you have only to speak in a kind tone, and look as kindly as you speak, and you are sure to please them.”

“Is that all?” remarked Stephen. “Well, I think I can do that. But I say, Will, is the lady you’ve looked out for me as pleasant looking as Egbert’s?”

“What is your taste?” asked Will, preparing, with the air of a connoisseur, to direct it, if he expressed an ignorance of what it should consist.

“Oh,” said Stephen, “I am not very particular, something like Maude will do.”

“Like Maude?” echoed Will, thunderstruck at the coolness with which Stephen made the remark. “Something like Maude will do!” he reiterated, “I should think it would. A right modest remark, truly. Why, Stephen, there is not another like her in the world.”

"Isn't there? Oh, I did not know that – how should I?" returned he, simply. "I have never travelled like you have, so I am not likely to know. Only if you know any one of her sort now, I should like it better."

"No, nor I don't know any of her sort," he replied, half affronted at his brother's presumption. It was, however, but for a moment. He burst out into a laugh, and said, "I know better now what will please you, and will try if I can't satisfy you. You remember Minny Meadows, don't you?"

"Yes," said Stephen, thoughtfully, "A young girl with long dark hair and bright black eyes, used to laugh at me and pinch me, because she said I was so sleepy and dull. Oh, yes, I remember her. I liked her a little, I don't know why, only she was a lively little girl, always merry. I recollect once, when we were alone, she asked me if I had ever kissed a girl in my life."

"And what said you?" asked Will, laughing.

"I told her to be sure I had — I had kissed both my sisters. She laughed at me, and asked if I had kissed no other female, and held, 'Yes, my mother.'"

"Your mother, pshaw!" cried Will. "Well, what else said she?"

"Oh, she laughed more than ever, and asked if I had kissed anyone else. I told her no and she wanted to know if I didn't wish to try. I said no, not particularly —"

"And didn't you kiss her?" asked Will, in unaffected surprise.

"Kiss her!" echoed Stephen. "No, to be sure not, never thought of such a thing. When I said that, she laughed in my face, and was very merry."

"Didn't she say anything?" asked Will.

"No, nothing; but I think she called me fool, and ran laughing away," concluded Stephen.

"So I should think," said Will. "Well, she is the lady I have marked out for your wife. Will she do?"

"Oh, very well — very nicely," said Stephen, rubbing his hands. "But what shall I say to her when we are alone?"

"Oh, all sorts of kind things," returned Will.

"Yes, but which is the best sort?" interrogated Stephen. "Tell me something to begin with, then I can go on, perhaps, pretty well."

"Who would take me for the youngest brother of seven?" asked Will, mirthfully, "If they saw me teaching you all how to make love?"

"Ha! but you were always after the young girls, Master Will," said Rupert. "Besides, Robin Hood taught you, and there's nobody knows how to please a woman like him."

"Well, but what shall I say?" inquired Stephen, impatiently. "Tell me, else you will forget it."

"Why, when you get alone with her, tell her you want to have a few lessons in kissing," said Will; "Give her one, and ask her whether she does not think you will make a good pupil. My life on't, you will find plenty to talk about afterwards."

"Oh! but I don't like," said Stephen, fancying Will was advising rather too bold a step for one who was quite a novice in the art.

"Don't like!" reiterated Will, scornfully; "Be-shrew me, Stephen, an' I did not know you to be a stout woodsman, I should think you no better than a great girl dressed up."

"But suppose she shouldn't like it, and be offended?" asked Stephen.

"Why kiss her again, and tell her you will try and do it better until you please her," argued Will; "Offended, too! As if kissing a girl could offend her. I never heard of any one yet who did not like kissing, provided the kiss was not given by one you couldn't fancy, and then, of course, that alters the case. But rest assured, Stephen, Minny would never have asked you that question if she had not fancied you, so you need not be afraid."

Stephen promised to pluck up heart and woo this Minny Meadows like a man, and Rupert wanted to know whether he couldn't stop with him to see how he did it, in order that when it came to his turn he might know how to go about it, but Will put a decided negative upon that request, and tried to explain how two were company and three none.

Rupert did not exactly understand it, but was content to take Will's reasoning as law, and before the subject was finished, they entered the cottage where dwelt Minny Meadows. Will, who was as busy as a bee on a blossom, and who doated upon his occupation, looked round for Minny as he entered. She was at home and alone.

"Ah, my pretty Minny, I am glad to find you. I wanted to see you very particularly," said he, approaching and taking her hand.

"I am glad I am so fortunate in being at home to meet you," she replied, dropping a curtsy.

"Yes," replied Will, "and I am not the only one who wants to see you particularly. My brother Stephen wants to say something to you of great importance."

"He does!" answered Minny, blushing up to the eyes suddenly. "What can he want to say to me particularly?"

"I want to have," said Stephen, quickly, with a face as pale as death, and a beating heart – "I want to have a few lessons –"

"Hush!" said Will, laughing. "Don't be in such a confounded hurry, man. He will tell you presently, Minny, what he wants. In the meantime let me tell you what I want. You have heard my sisters are going to be married in three days' time?"

"Oh, yes, and that you are going to have rare doings at the Hall," returned Minny.

"Exactly, and we wish you very particularly to be there – mind, very particularly," said Will.

"Thank you. I hope to come, certainly. I shall like very much to come. All the village will be there, I hear."

"All the lads and lasses will be there, and I hope there will be a good many married upon that day. You will bring your sweetheart, Minny, and—"

"No, no," interrupted Stephen, "No, you forget, Will."

"No, I do not," said Will, interrupting in his turn. "Just hold your tongue a minute or two. I had no idea you would have been so anxious. You will bring your sweetheart, Minny?"

"I haven't one to bring," she said, with a smile.

"Do you mean that, Minny?" asked Will, looking at her earnestly.

"Yes I do, indeed," she replied, blushing, and affecting a laugh; "I have not one I like well enough to call him a sweetheart."

"Oh," said Will, "I fancied you would have come with your sweetheart, and taking advantage of the ceremony being performed, have got married."

"Oh no," cried she, laughingly, "I have not one, I assure you, or there is no knowing what I might have done."

"Then I'll be your sweetheart," cried Stephen, with a sudden exertion of spirit, looking, with inflated nostril, almost in a rage, rather than affectionate.

"Bravo!" cried Will, slapping him on the shoulder, "Well said, Stephen! try again."

"Yes," said Stephen, "I will, Minny, I'll be your sweetheart; and I'll come and fetch you to the Hall. And we'll be married at the same time my sisters are."

"Bravely said, Stephen!" exclaimed Will, "Bravely said! There, Minny, there's an offer. Now let me tell you, that I will answer, by my honour, that he is sincere and in earnest. You tell me you are not engaged, and there is nothing so particularly ill looking in Stephen that you should refuse him on that point, so you had better accept him. And as when you have made your mind up, there is no use in waiting a long time before you wed, why, I see nothing to prevent you marrying when Barby and Winny do. What do you say?"

"Oh, dear me! You have taken me by surprise. I am so totally unprepared I don't know what to say," murmured Minny, looking terribly confused.

"Say you'll have me," said Stephen, gathering courage from Will's applause, "I like you, Minny – I really do like you. I told you, Will, I did – didn't I?"

"That he did," said Will, putting in a good word or two for him.

"Yes," continued Stephen, "and I told him too, Minny, that you one day asked me if I had ever kiss–"

"Oh, he told me almost as much as I dare say he will tell you while we are away," hastily interrupted Will. "Come, Rupert and Gregory, let us begone. There is a great deal to do yet. We shall be sure to see you at the Hall, Minny?"

"Oh, yes, I shall be sure to come," said the maiden, delightedly.

"And in your wedding dress. Maude is coming into the village this evening. She has a great deal of taste, and I'll recommend her to you," said Will, pressing Minny's hands. She held down her head, and Will continued, "If you don't persuade her, Stephen, to be a bride that morning, then you are no Gamwell."

"I'll try for it," said Stephen, coming out wonderfully, "for I'll talk in a kind tone to you, Minny, and I'll look at you kindly, and I'll kiss – I mean I'll squeeze your lips – no, I mean your hands – and perhaps I shall please you, and then you will like me?"

"I can't say," said Minny, looking archly at him.

"Well, I shall leave him to try and persuade you to love him, and that's better than liking," said Will, smiling; and taking his two brothers by the arm. "Adieu, my pretty sister Minny, that will be," he cried; "Don't be too hard to be persuaded. He means kindly and lovingly, if he has not got the tongue to say so. Good bye." So saying, he and his two brothers quitted the house.

"Now then," said Gregory, "Where are our two wives?"

"Why, they live close here," replied Will; "They are two cousins, Mabel and Editha Flowerfeld."

"Oh, I know them well enough," said Gregory.

"So do I," exclaimed Rupert.

"So you ought, for they are two pretty girls," returned Will, "and you ought to know them a great deal better than I, who only came to Barnsdale scarce a year and a half ago. Yet I would wager my best bow to a broken shaft, I know all in the village better than any of you."

"That's very likely, you are such a fellow to skip about, and laugh and talk," returned Gregory, "We are none of us like you."

"No," said Will, "if you were, I should not have to come about with you lovemaking."

"Oh," answered Gregory, "This will be easier work than I thought for. I have often spoken to these two girls, and very nice girls they are."

"Oh, you think that?" said Will.

"Yes" replied Gregory, "and I shan't mind asking Editha to marry me."

"Very true," observed Will, "But you must take care how you do it. It won't do to bolt it out plump, because the chances are ten to one but you are refused."

"Well, what should I say? I don't understand what else I could say – I want her to marry me, and I say to her. 'Will you marry me?' I can't say more or less," said the literal Gregory.

"That's all very well, but you must lead the conversation to it," exclaimed Will.

"How do you mean lead the conversation to it?" inquired Gregory.

"Do you remember I asked Minny Meadows to bring her sweetheart to the Hall?" said Will.

"Yes," answered Gregory, "And she said she hadn't got one."

"Very well," returned Will, "And that gave an opportunity for Stephen to make her an offer."

"So it did!" ejaculated Rupert; "Well, that's very strange. I shouldn't have thought of that."

"Ah! I see," exclaimed Gregory, thoughtfully, "Getting a wife is like taking a deer, you must lay up for it if you wish to get it, for if you come plump on it suddenly, whisk! It's away, and it will be some time before you have another chance at it."

"True," replied Will; "Bear that in mind, and you'll do. A woman is like a deer: she may be approached successfully with caution, but startle her by any abruptness, she flies off, and the odds are great that you do not get near her again in a hurry."

"Well," exclaimed Gregory, with determination, "I have laid up many a time for deer and been successful almost always. I'll lay up for Editha, and try if I can't be as lucky as heretofore."

"So will I for Mabel," said Rupert. "Come along, Will."

Away they went, and soon reached the Flowerfeld's abode. Editha and Mabel were there. They were lively, high-spirited girls, and quickly there was a great deal of banter and mirth going forward among them, their suitors, and Will. The latter enjoyed, with the greatest possible degree of glee, Gregory's method of laying up for Editha, as he called it. He began by taking advantage of the experience he had received that morning, and asked Editha quietly, whether she meant to bring her sweetheart with her, and she replied she would bring half a dozen. He was aghast at this, gave a long whistle, then turned round to Will and said:

"I say, Will, that's a settler. Half a dozen! That won't do, you know, eh? How about that?"

Will laughed, and took up the cudgels in defence of Gregory, who was being belaboured with banter most soundly. He quickly satisfied Editha that one certain beau for an escort was better than half a dozen uncertain, and, by the same reasoning, one decided lover was better than a score of doubtful ones, and so clearly established in every point of view that, by accepting Gregory's offer, it was the very best thing possible she could do, that he obtained from her a consent to accompany Gregory to the Hall at all events. And it now only remained for Gregory to put all his persuasive powers into action, and persuade her when there to become his wife.

In the warmth of their arguing, Rupert had been unnoticed, and when Will had brought the question to a satisfactory conclusion, he turned his attention to Rupert, to give him a helping hand if necessary, but he found him with the younger sister, Mabel, in a corner, in the very act of kissing her – an act which he disturbed by a very unceremonious and inconsiderate shout.

"Aha! Master Rupert," he cried, "You need no assistance from me. I hope you have prevailed upon Mabel to favour you with her company at the same time Editha accompanies Gregory to the Hall?"

"I – yes – I only was asking Mabel to give me a few lessons in kissing, that was all," said Rupert, with a face like scarlet, and without understanding a word that Will had addressed to him, being horribly confused at being discovered.

"To be sure," answered Will, "And I have little doubt, Mabel, you will find him an apt pupil, one who will improve by practice. You don't answer, Mabel; never mind, I know you think so. Well, goodbye to you all. I am wanted at home, there are a great many things to be done which cannot proceed without my presence, and therefore I must be off. I shall see you all again soon – goodbye," and without waiting for a reply off he ran.

As he took his way to the Hall, he laughed till his sides ached at the scenes he had just witnessed, and enjoyed the idea of his six brothers

being married altogether, four of them, at least, with only three days' courtship. Simple men, too, who, passing their lives occupied in the duties of foresters, without having a thought about the fair sex, any farther than regarded the law they were bound to observe, imposed on them by Robin Hood, to respect them when and wherever they met with them.

They, totally unused to the soft ways of winning a woman's love, with none but primitive ideas of the relation between man and woman as opposite sexes, with no more than a vague notion that the same style of conduct, the same language which suited their fellow men would not exactly do for the society of females. They, never having a second thought about being married, to be suddenly persuaded to such a step, to do it to time, too, and be successful, with young and comely maidens whom they had rarely seen, and never had any conversation approaching the nature of even flirting. There was something so ridiculous, so improbable, that Will would not have credited it, had he not only been prime mover, but eye witness in the whole transaction.

"Well" he cried, after indulging in a convulsion of laughter at the figure and mysterious movements his sedate brother, Gregory, made in his love essay; "Well, we never know what we can do till we try."

Upon reaching the hall, he met Robin, Marian, and Maude, and related to them the occurrences which had just transpired, and they indulged in great merriment over the affair. When the brothers returned, during the evening, at different times, they were subjected, as they entered, to a volley of smart sayings, congratulations, and bantering queries, which they bore very manfully.

There was no disguise about them, and every question asked they answered literally. And, notwithstanding they were such novices, they had one and all been successful in obtaining their respective ladies to consent to bestow their hand upon them, on the eventful day which was to see Little John and Much wed Winifred and Barbara.

The morning of this expected day rose beautifully fine; the sky was one vast expanse of blue, and a delicious cool air played about, tempering the sun's heat delightfully. Saxons flocked down from all parts in the vicinity early in the day, to partake of the festivities prepared for their enjoyment. They came with light hearts, resolved to make the day a merry one, and there was everything provided to keep up such a laudable intention. The marriages were to take place early in the morning. Maude, Marian, and Winifred had been to the village the day previously, and arranged with the six damsels who were to be united to the Gamwells all such things as were necessary to be arranged; and there had been a great deal of talking and settling between the fathers of the damsels and old Sir Guy upon their childrens' union. Be it understood, that when the young ladies

gave their consents to their respective swains, they – maugre the short notice – fully determined to keep their word. And it need not be said, that when a young lady has resolved to marry a particular person at his wish and desire, and she has a liking very like love for him, it must be something very extraordinary and very powerful which will keep her from doing it. So, in spite of advice, which it was deemed essential to give, or rather throw away upon them, not to marry so hurriedly, they made up their minds to be married, and were deaf to any words which tended to persuade them to the contrary.

When the parents found this to be the case, and there was no time to lose, they visited Sir Guy, who had no thought of controlling the choice of his sons, and made such settlements as were fitting and proper to be made. And accordingly, at the time appointed, a monk from St. Mary's Abbey performed the ceremony, and the eight couples were united to each other, to their own peculiar satisfaction, and to the gratification of all around. They then proceeded to take a share in the sports of the day, and never could a body of people appear happier than did those assembled to celebrate the wedding; and if their thoughts and feelings were laid bare, perhaps never were a body of people happier than they were.

After a dinner, laid out in profusion, and eaten with excessive enjoyment, they entered fully into the sports of the day. Villagers and Robin's merrie men, village maidens, and men and women, and boys and girls, all were there, mixed in sports adapted to their capabilities, position, and wishes.

Dancing, singing, shooting, qouit playing, bowls, quarter staff play, kissing in the ring, and all the sports and pastimes peculiar to the time, were indulged in with a perfect abandonment to pleasure — delightful to behold. Everything which could conduce to happiness was thought of and other which should strive to produce the most comfort and the greatest harmony. As all their energies were directed to one point, that of making the day pass delightfully, they had the satisfaction to find, at the close of the day, that their efforts were crowned with entire success. Nothing occurred to alloy their pleasure, and for many a long day afterwards did those who were at the fête look back with a grateful remembrance to the day on which was celebrated the marriages of the eight Gamwells.



Chapter 5

*Why, who art thou, thou bold fellow,
Who rangest so boldly here?
In sooth, to be brief, thou look'st like a thief,
That's come to steal our king's deer.
If thou be Robin Hood, bold Arthur replied,
As I now think well thou art,
Then here's my hand, my name's Arthur-a-Bland,
We two will never part.
But tell me, O! tell me, where is Little John?
Of him I fain would hear;
For we are ally'd, by the mother's side,
And he is my kinsman dear.*

----- Robin Hood and the Tanner

*Where dost thou dwell? quoth Robin Hood;
I pray thee now me tell;
Sad news, I hear, there is abroad,
I fear all is not well.
What is that news? the tinker said,
Tell me, without delay;
I am a tinker by my trade,
And do live in Banbury.
And when they came to Nottingham,
There they took up their inn,
And there they called for ale and wine,
To drink it was no sin.
Then Robin's anger did arise –
He fought right manfully,
Until he made the tinker sore,
And almost fit to fly.*

----- Robin Hood and the Tinker

*Bold Robin Hood ranging the forest all round,
The forest all round ranged he;
O there he did meet a gay lady,
She came weeping along the highway.
Why weep you? why weep you? bold Robin said,
What weep you for?
Then bold Robin Hood for Nottingham goes,
For Nottingham town goes he;
O there did he meet with a poor beggar man,
He came creeping along the highway.
O take them! O take them! said the sheriff,
O take them along with thee;
For there's never a man in fair Nottingham.
Can do the like of thee.*

----- Robin Hood Rescuing the Three Squires

The spring following the events just narrated, saw Robin Hood, with Marian, and all his merrie men again dwelling in the depths of the old forest, Sherwood. His child had died during the winter, at which both he

and Marian were much grieved. But his endeavours to restore her to cheerfulness, and the constant calls upon him for action, the frequent requisition for personal exertion, prevented him feeling the loss so strongly as he might have done, had his mind been able to dwell upon it.

And the knowledge to their sensible minds that, if it was an evil, it was an irremediable one, tended greatly to restore that cheerfulness of character which, for the sake of those around them, it was necessary they should wear.

About this period, a vast number of Normans returned from the wars to take possession of estates granted to them by Henry II for services done by them to him in Normandy. Many of them passed through Sherwood, on their way to their respective destinations, and the consequence was they had to pay very handsomely for their passage through the wood. Loud complaints were made, but were unheeded by all the authorities dwelling in Nottingham. The truth was, that so many of the merrie men, all Saxon yeomen, were related in some way to the inhabitants of Nottingham, that their influence was exerted in preventing any harsh measures being put in force against the denizens of the forest, for fear that, were they to consent to any attempt at their expulsion, they might have the melancholy satisfaction of seeing a near relative hung before their door some fine morning.

Still, to keep up a show of justice, the reward offered for the capture of Robin Hood was doubled. Anyone who offered to try and make him prisoner was – upon a proper representation of their intent, and proofs that they possessed a chance of success, and a determination, if possible, to insure it – furnished with a warrant to that effect, and, if they succeeded, it was to be the certificate that they were duly entitled to the reward promised. Several had undertaken to accomplish the task, but had either joined the band, or been so soundly trounced, that they were in no hurry again to enter the green wood.

One morning, as Robin and Will Scarlet were strolling through the forest, they suddenly encountered Much looking flushed, heated, and out of breath.

“How now, Much?” inquired Robin. “What is the matter with thee? you look plaguily breath-worn. Hast been running hard?”

“No,” replied Much, breathing heavily; “I have been having a bout at quarter staff play with Arthur-a-Bland. Beshrew me, the fellow has the strength of a giant in his arms.”

“It is tough work to have a bout with Arthur,” returned Robin, “Particularly if he should happen to be in earnest.”

“You can hardly call it play,” said Much. “Although he never loses his temper, he knows very little of the pure science of the art. He conquers by sheer strength.”

“What! he made thee cry quarter – eh?” asked Robin.

“It I had not, he would have knocked all the breath out of me; and I verily believe my staff would have gone into a thousand pieces, he strikes so desperately hard,” returned Much. “Little John has got him in hand now, but Arthur stands no chance with him. Directly he begins to batter in that terrific manner, Little John sends his staff flying out of his hands, and gives him some tough knocks for not keeping a better hold.”

“What induced you to get playing with Arthur-a-Bland?” inquired Robin.

“Why,” replied Much, “just to pass away an hour pleasantly, and to try his powers, for he has the reputation among the men of being a sturdy player. Besides, it is said he conquered you at the staff, and so I thought I would see if I could stand up to him successfully.”

“Beat you at quarter staff, Robin!” said Will Scarlet, astonished. “No man ever did that, I thought. It is not true that Arthur-a-Bland beat you?”

“I faith,” answered Robin, “Something after the fashion he served Much did he serve me. The fellow hits just as though he was striking with a bar of iron, instead of an oaken staff.”

“But how was this? When was it?” interrogated Will, eagerly.

“Scarce three years since,” answered Robin. “One morning I was strolling along through the wood, and encountered bluff Arthur, whom I had never seen before, leaning upon a pike staff, surveying a herd of deer feeding in the bend, with open mouth and eyes, as if he was looking upon something supernatural. His stalwart frame and look of simplicity struck me as something droll, and I resolved to have some sport with him. I stole close up to him, unseen and unheard, and then saluted him with as hearty a thwack between the shoulders as my open hand could give. He started, and, twisting his shoulders about, looked me angrily in the face.”

“‘Why, who art thou that wanders into the forest, as if every foot of it were thine own?’ I demanded. ‘To be brief with thee, thou lookest marvelously like a thief, here on purpose to rob the forest of the King’s deer. Now, I would have you learn that I am a keeper of this forest, whose duty it is not to suffer any marauding varlets, like you, to roam about, singling out the fattest deer of the herd, to bring down when an opportunity serves, unlawfully. Therefore, I shall send thee back from whence thou comest.’”

“‘Wilt thou?’ replied Arthur-a-Bland; ‘I do not think thou canst. Wert thou thrice a forest keeper, and had thrice thy number to back thee, thou couldst not make me go, were it my will to stay!’”

“I have none to back me,” I returned, “nor need I any – I can do it quite easy enough by myself. My sword and bow and arrows are my backers. Troop, man, troop!”

"I care not one straw for thy bow nor thy quiver of arrows,' he cried, 'if I but give thee a knock with my staff, you will never again use your sword or bow, you forest whelp!'"

"Speak civilly, good fellow," I responded, "or it is not unlikely I may give you a thrashing, to teach thee to speak more mannerly."

"Marry, go whip an oak with a reed!' he exclaimed. 'Who dost thou think thou art? Do you suppose I care one jot for your big looks? If you wish for a bout, I am your man.'"

"You have no sword," I observed.

"What want I with a sword? I have this staff that will serve me and quilt thee,' he answered."

"Very well," I replied, "I yield to thy weapon. I have an oaken staff with me, I think about the same length us thine."

"That is right,' he said, 'Come on!' and he brandished his pike staff over his head."

"Let us measure the staffs," I said, and stood up mine. He brought his to it, and said hastily."

"Never mind measuring the staffs. Yours is a little longer than mine, it is no matter."

"Oh yes," I replied, "We will have them the same length, or it will not be fair play" and I took out my forest knife, and cut them to the same length. While I was doing this he kept calling on me to come on –"

"I care not for length of staffs,' he cried. 'Mine is of good oak, eight foot and a half long, it will knock down an ox, and I fancy it will do the same for thee."

"I had soon completed the operation of shortening my staff; and unbuckling my belt, laying down my bow and quiver, we set to work. I gave him the first blow, and saw the blood come trickling down his forehead – he staggered back almost stunned, and I waited for him to recover a little. When he did, he rattled away with his staff with a power and force I never before had to cope with. I could scarce keep my staff from being beaten, by the sheer weight of his blows, out of my hand. While stepping back to avoid a blow, my foot slipped, I was thrown off my guard. He took advantage of the opportunity, and dealt me the most tremendous blow on the crown I ever received – it knocked me down as if I had been shot by an arrow.

I, however, sprung up to my feet again. I was somewhat confused by the blow. I felt the blood from the cut it made seeping through my hair and trickling into my ears. Nevertheless, I fancy I repaid with interest that blow, for I made his jacket smoke again. Yet he rained his blows with such

terrific force, it was almost as much as I could do to defend myself. But when I had a chance I made my hits tell. I think we fought about two hours, making the old wood echo with our blows, going round and round like a couple of wild boars fighting. At length, as there seemed no likelihood of his being tired, and my arms ached to such a degree that I could scarce hold the staff, I thought it little use to continue a sport where nothing was to be gained, not even the satisfaction of defeating a good player, had I won. I cried out –”

“Hold thy hand, hold thy hand!

Let our quarrel drop here. We may thrash each other to mash without getting any corn, so let’s leave off. I make you free of the forest, to come in and depart when you please, for you are a bold fellow.”

“‘God ha’ mercy for nought,’ he replied; ‘I bought the right to come with my staff – I may thank that and not thee, for it.’”

“It is true,” I replied, “Thou hast worked hard for it, and so far hast a right to it. But you will have some trouble to defend your right, for by the Holy Mother, if your right depends only on your power of keeping it by the use of your staff, you will soon find that the freedom of the green wood is only to be maintained by a broken pate and sore limbs, and that of such frequent occurrence that a life in town is much to be preferred.”

“‘Why, look ye, forester, I count my head a hard one, and my limbs as hugely tough,’ he said, leaning on his staff, and speaking with seriousness, ‘But you have broken the first, and sorely bruised the last. You are the first that has done so, and I think there are few others who can do as you have done. But if your fellow men play as well as you, why, I will even shoulder my staff and turn my face to the town, little as I like a town life.’”

“Thou dost not love a town life, then?” I exclaimed, thinking of a sudden that this sturdy fellow would be a desirable acquisition to our little community.”

“‘Love it,’ he echoed, ‘Does any man love that which makes his heart sick and sorrowful? Marry! It comes wondrous distasteful to me, to be the slave and footstool for every currish Norman to wipe his feet on – to be called slave and dog, churl and serf, with every curl of the lip.’”

“‘To hell with such a spirit as will bear it, say I!’”

“My master, a Norman, bestowed a host of vile names upon me this morning, and not content with belabouring me with his foul tongue, he must cuff me – ha! ha! I did not wait for a second blow; this staff was near me, and with it I lent him a knock on the shoulders that scared him out of his wits, and another upon the head, which knocked him down senseless – at least he lay very still. So I shouldered my staff, turned my back to his roof, and was wandering through here when you encountered me.”

“What art thou by trade, and where didst thou dwell until now?” I demanded.

“‘I am a tanner by trade,’ he answered, ‘and have lived here in Nottingham for some years.’”

“Well, my bold tanner,” I responded, “If thou hast no greater love for thy craft than thou hast for a town, thou wilt forsake it and live with me in the green wood. My name is Robin Hood – I need not say thou hast heard of me.”

“And art thou really Robin Hood, and not a king’s forester?” he asked, doubtfully.”

“As I am a man, I am he – Robin Hood” I replied, looking as serious as the poor fellow’s anxious and varying countenance would permit me.”

“Then I am right glad to hear thee say so,’ he cried, with joy depicted on his features. ‘I came to seek thee, Robin Hood. Thou must be he, for none but he could have made me think quarter staff might be played at too long to be pleasant. I came to seek thee – that is my reason for entering the forest. But when thou told me thou wert a keeper, I believed thee, and thought it as well not to speak of the purport for which I entered the wood. It was to join thee and thy band – there’s my hand upon it and in all your company you will not have a stauncher or truer follower than Arthur-a-Bland, the tanner of Nottingham.’”

“I like thy free spirit, Arthur,” I uttered, “and I’m pleased to add thee to the number of my merrie men. Our laws are few and simple, but must be observed, in all things. Else, you will be as free as the air which now plays among the leaves and upon our faces. You will be well clothed, well fed, I am satisfied, have no cause to regret the change you have made.”

“I vow my heart leaps within me at the thoughts of being one among thee!” he exclaimed. ‘I shall not be quite a stranger, too, unto all, for Little John is a kinsman of mine, by my mother’s side. Her brother married Little John’s mother, who was sister to Sir Guy Gamwell. I have often wished to be in the green wood with you all, but opportunity never served until now. I shall soon see Little John, I suppose? I’faith I long to see him, the bonnie blade.’”

“You shall see him at once, I remarked, and blew a summons to him on my horn. He happened to be near the spot, and speedily made his appearance. Observing the blood trickling down both our faces, he ejaculated, rapidly –”

“How now, Robin! What’s the matter? Tell me quickly. You look as though you had been badly dealt.’”

“That have I,” I returned “Here stands the man who has done the deed — a tanner, who has tanned me soundly.”

“‘If he has, he plays well at quarter staff,’ cried Little John, ‘And I will have a bout with him to see if he can tan my hide as well. Come on, my bonnie tanner.’”

“And Little John was ready in an instant with his staff for play, while the tanner, scarce knowing what was meant, raised his staff to oppose him. In another moment they would have been hard at it, but I cried out –”

“Hold thy hand, Little John. He is a good yeoman, and hath joined our band. He tells me he is kinsman of thine, and bears the name of Arthur-a-Bland.”

“‘What, of Nottingham?’ inquired Little John.”

“‘The same,’ replied Arthur, ‘and though we have never met since we were boys, yet do I remember thee again.’”

“‘I cannot say I do thee,’ replied Little John ‘but I have no doubt thou art my kinsman, and so, welcome to the green wood and merrie men who dwell in it.’”

“With that they embraced, and after Arthur was installed into the band, we spent a right jovial day I do assure you. That is the whole story of my bout with Arthur-a-Bland,” concluded Robin Hood.

“Well,” ejaculated Much, “You came off better than I could have believed. I got some raps at him, but he kept me so much employed in guarding, that I had no chance of hitting him. It put me somewhat in mind of Little John’s extraordinary rapidity, but it wanted the science with it.”

“But,” said Will Scarlet, “I don’t deem that beating you at the quarter staff, Robin, because it appears that Arthur-a-Bland had the worst of it.”

“Deem it what you will,” returned Robin, “that is the truth of the matter; but I received the soundest cudgeling from Gaspar-a-Tin.”

“You did!” cried Will Scarlet; “When was that – before he joined the band?”

“Yes,” replied Robin, “I always tested the courage and strength of a man before he joined the band. I must have no faint hearts among my merrie men. I was on my way to Nottingham one morning, and I overtook Gaspar-a-Tin, who was also on his way to Nottingham. He looked a sturdy, lusty fellow, and one whom I thought would be of good service if I could persuade him to join us. I therefore accosted him in bantering tone.”

“Good morrow, yeoman,” I said, “Thou art a traveller, I see. There is bad news abroad, I hear, is it truth?”

“‘What is the news?’ demanded he. ‘I have heard of none of any import. I am a tinker by trade. I live in Banbury, and have but just come from thence. I have seen or heard nothing on my road here in the shape of bad news.’”

"The news I have to tell is," I answered, "that two tinkers were set in the stocks for drinking."

"If that is all your news, it is not worth a groat," he answered; "If everyone was placed in the stocks for drinking, you would be sure to have a seat there, for you look not as if you disliked good liquor."

"Why, I am no enemy to a cup of good wine, I confess," I exclaimed, "Neither is anyone who has a jovial heart. But what brings thee from Banbury here? Surely not to follow thy craft only."

"Not that only; but there is an outlaw in these parts named Robin Hood. There is a reward of a hundred golden merks offered for him, and I am going to try and take him and get it."

"**You**," I exclaimed, looking rather surprised at hearing the cool confession of his purpose. "How do you propose to take him?"

"I have a warrant from the king," replied the tinker, "granted me, properly filled up, which empowers me to seize him, and have the reward."

"Indeed! You talk as if it was an easy matter to take him," I said.

"I think I shall find it so," he rejoined; "I have stout limbs, and as stout a heart, so I think I stand as good a chance as anyone else."

"Do you know him when you see him?" I inquired.

"No; I wish I did," he returned; "It would make my job all the lighter. Do you know him?"

"I have seen him," I rejoined.

"Then perhaps you can help me in this matter," he observed; "I will give you a share of the money if you can point me out where to find him, and assist me to capture him."

"Let me see the warrant first," I said, "in order that I may know that it is a good and proper one."

"No, I am much obliged," he answered, with a cunning leer, "I shall trust it in no one's hands but my own. I know that it is a good and proper one, that is enough for me, and I shall show it no one but Robin Hood, and not to him until I capture him."

"Perhaps it is the wisest plan," I replied, and thinking to make a jest of the fellow, I rejoined, "He is going to Nottingham, I heard this morning, and if you will come with me there, you shall see him, I pledge you my word."

"Agreed," he responded, "I take thee at thy word. I have naught else to do but believe thee, and if I find when I am there that thou hast deceived me, I will dust thy doublet well for thee."

“He had a stout crab tree staff with him, which he flourished as he said this. I longed to have a bout with him then, but fearing I should lose some good sport, I restrained my inclination, and laughing, told him, if he found I had deceived him, I was willing he should, if he could. Well, accordingly, on we went to Nottingham.”

“When we got there we stopped at the hostel called the Flagon, and I ordered some old ale of a peculiar sort, which the host keeps. The tinker was very thirsty, and drank deeply. The ale was soon gone, and we had some wine. After that, more ale and subsequent to that more wine. The tinker, who had drank nearly all that was placed before him – for not being inclined to drink, I scarce wetted my lips – soon became tipsy, and then boasted to such an extent what he would do, that it was the choicest thing to hear him.”

“He arrived, after capturing me, to taking the whole band, like flock of sheep, up to London, and becoming, ultimately, through rendering important services, to have the highest post in the kingdom. Just as he was about to marry the King’s daughter, he fell asleep. Knowing that I should soon receive a visit from him in the wood, I abstracted the bag which he said contained the warrant, for the purpose of enjoying, when he awoke, his confusion at his loss.”

“But some of the sheriff’s people coming in, and fearing too early a discovery of my person by the tinker, I left. But before I went, I discharged the reckoning, and told the host to tell the tinker, when he awoke, that the bill was unpaid, and that if he asked who I was, he was to tell him I was Robin Hood, and if he wished to find me, I should be in the green wood, along with the king’s deer.”

“‘I know your face well, Robin Hood,’ said the host; ‘I knew it when you first entered, but I will make no more use of my knowledge than you wish me.’”

“I thanked him, and left the house. It appears that Gaspar-a-Tin slept long and soundly, but when he awoke he missed me, and immediately afterwards his money. He shouted out for the host.”

“‘Host,’ he cried – ‘Host, I am robbed, ruined and undone!’”

“‘Not here, I hope,’ replied the host, ‘for you have a long bill to pay.’”

“‘Bill to pay!’ reiterated Gaspar, with a groan, ‘I have nought to pay it with. I have been robbed. I had a warrant from the King to capture Robin Hood, and the reward would have made a rich man of me. Now I have lost that, and a sum of money beside, out of a bag which hung at my girdle. He who came in with me, too, and promised to point out Robin Hood to me, is gone, and I fear it is he who has taken my money and warrant too.’”

“‘Why that friend you speak of was Robin Hood’ exclaimed the host, laughing.”

“‘Robin Hood!’ roared the tinker. ‘Oh that I had but known that when I had him here! I would have made him my prisoner, or it should have cost me very dearly. However, it is of no use to stay here lamenting. I will away, and seek him out, whatever betides me.’”

“‘I should like to have the amount of my bill before you go,’ suggested the host.”

“‘How much is it?’ demanded Gasar, with a sigh.”

“‘Ten shillings,’ answered the host, rubbing his hands, and enjoying the tinker’s discomfiture.”

“‘I have no money about me,’ he answered, ‘but I will leave thee my tools. They are worth more than that sum and so soon as I have captured Robin Hood, I will return and redeem them.’”

“‘Well, then,’ replied the host, ‘if you wish to meet with him quickly, and art not afraid of a few hard knocks, if you go you will be sure to find him slaying the king’s deer.’”

“It was too late that night to set out in quest of me, but in the morning I was on the track of a deer, when I espied the tinker coming. He soon clapped his eyes upon me, and giving a shout, he ran towards me, brandishing his long staff.”

“‘What knave is this,’ I called out as he advanced, ‘who dares intrude on me in this ungainly fashion?’”

“‘No knave,’ cried the tinker, ‘and whether either of us have done the other a wrong, my staff shall quickly show you.’”

“At once he commenced an attack upon me with his staff. I had to jump nimbly out of his reach, until I could draw my sword, which, when I did, I found fully occupied in defending me from his heavy blows, and so slight a weapon, being opposed to such a weighty staff as his, I found of no use, for I did not want to maim him. I, therefore, called out —”

“‘Hold! You have me at unfair odds. Let me, too, have a quarter staff, and I’ll stand up to you as long as I am able, giving you free license to drub me as soundly as you can.’”

“He granted me my request, and I hastily cut myself one from an oak. It was not so straight or so smooth as I could wish, but it was better than none. We then set to work, and I soon found I knew more about quarter staff than he did. As I not only drew blood from his head, but I rattled him so severely about body and legs, I thought once or twice he would fly, for he looked right and left for a clear space.”

"But a succession of hard knocks so excited his rage that he became almost frantic. He struck regardless of all the hits I gave him, and by great strength and ability to bear punishment he began to tire me out. He held the staff with both hands, near the end, and laid about me as if he was cleaving wood or thrashing corn. My arms and wrists, which had supported my staff, and endured for near three hours the whole weight of his tremendous blows, grew nearly powerless, while he seemed to have new strength. He beat down my guard, and although he entangled his staff frequently, at which times I disciplined him severely, still he kept on, until my head, my shoulders, and legs bore evidence of his strength and perseverance. As in the case of Arthur-a-Bland, there was no honor to be gained in defeating such a player, and in consequence no desire to bear unmoved the fierce blows he dealt me, I leaped out of his reach and called a boon.

"'I'll hang thee on a tree first!' he roared, in the height of his passion."

"But I blew three blasts of my horn, and Little John, with the merrie men, were speedily at my side. I had seated myself to recover under a tree, while Gaspar-a-Tin, surprised at the sound of my horn, and the appearance of the merrie men, stood motionless."

"'What is the matter?' asked Little John."

"Here's a tinker who hath drubbed me well," I answered.

"'Drubbed thee!' replied Little John, laughing, 'I should just like to see the blade who could do it, because I would try if he could do the same for me'. And with the readiness he ever evinces when there is a chance of having a bout of quarter staff, he advanced to the tinker, who now, rather cooled, displayed no very great willingness to comply with the invitation. But I prevented him displaying his abilities, and made the tinker an offer to join the band, upon the same terms and privileges we all enjoyed. He hesitated a little, and then he said —"

"'Well, I am a lone man, without kindred. I will join thee, and do as ye do,'"

"The next morning I saw him and then had a proof of his great power of enduring punishment, for his body, which I saw, was blue all over with bruises and, to tell the truth, mine was not much the better. In all my bouts or frays never was I so severely handled as by Gaspar-a-Tin, who has from that time been one of the merrie men."

"It must have been hard work," said Will. "Rather harder than agreeable. Little John may say what he pleases, but I prefer the bow and arrow to all the quarter staffs in the world, both as a sport and a weapon of defense or offence. It is, in my opinion, better to be shot out of the world at once, than beaten out of it by degrees. One pang is better than all the pains of the blows from a quarter staff."

"In some instances, it is most useful, where a bow is useless, for its use is not affected by an empty quiver," said Robin, "and when you do not absolutely desire to destroy a foe, a sound cudgeling makes him remember you longer than a flesh-wound from an arrow."

"Oh!" said Much, "It is glorious sport when you are opposed to a thorough good player. There's nothing to me equals the quarter staff."

"It is all very well, by way of varying your sport", contended Will, "But to me there's nothing in the world equals the bow."

"Nor to me!" said Robin, enthusiastically. Accompanied by Will Scarlet and Much, he strolled on in the direction of Nottingham. They had not proceeded far, when they met a young female weeping bitterly. As soon as Robin saw her, he hastened towards her, and accosted her.

"Why dost thou weep, maiden?" he asked, tenderly.

"I wish to see Robin Hood," said the girl, sobbing – "Oh! if you have pity, lead me quickly to him."

"I am Robin Hood, maiden," he answered, "Teach me how I can serve thee. No one of my company have done thee any wrong?" he cried, a flush mounting to his brow.

"Oh no! Oh no!" she replied quickly.

"Then tell me of what consists thy grief?" he exclaimed, pressing her hand encouragingly. "Three of my brothers, who are of your band, have been seized by the Sheriff of Nottingham," she replied.

"Ah!" ejaculated Robin. "Their names, maiden?"

"Adelbert, Edelbert, and Edwin Joyheart," she sobbed.

"Three of my most gallant and gentle hearts. Bold and true yeomen." exclaimed Robin. "How came they in his power? It is a few hours since I saw them."

"They entered the town early this morning to see my mother and father. They encountered a party of the sheriff's men dragging a young man to prison for having struck down one of their companions who had grossly insulted his mother. They interfered and rescued him –"

"Or they had been no followers of mine," interrupted Robin.

"And then, after they had driven the sheriff's men away, they came home, but had not been there half an hour when a strong band of the



sheriff's men came and took them away. They were recognized as belonging to your band, and they are to be hung immediately. They are now erecting a gallows at the town's foot, upon which my brothers are to be hung as soon as it is completed."

"Cheer thee, maiden," said Robin, kindly. "Fear not, they shall be saved. There is not a man in the band who would not peril life and limb in defense of, or to rescue from danger, anyone of their number. And I, most of all, would not suffer any of my people to perish without a determined effort to save them, or in the event of a failure, without visiting their destroyers with a terrible retaliation."

"Therefore, my gentle damsel, return thou and comfort the hearts of thy sad parents. Tell them Robin Hood will save their children, or their deaths shall be bitterly revenged."

"Heaven bless you for your kind words!" uttered the maiden. "I was told by those who knew you, that you were always ready to succor the distressed – a friend to the unfortunate – and I have proved you so. But pray be speedy, for they will hasten my brothers' death as much as they can."

"Trust me, maiden, I will be there in time; hie thee home, and be as happy as if this had not happened." said Robin, in a cheering voice.

"The Holy Virgin bless and keep thee! Thou hast made my heart glad," cried the girl, kissing his hands suddenly and earnestly. Then waving her hand, she turned and fled, and was quickly lost among the thickly clustered trees.

"Hurrah!" cried Will Scarlet. As soon as she had disappeared, "Now we shall have something to do – ha, ha! Now, Robin, your commands, and then we will show the Sheriff of Nottingham sport, eh?"

"You and Much hasten to Little John, bid him gather as many of the men as are near at hand and ready for speedy service," said Robin, quickly; "And when that is done, without one second being wasted in its performance, bid him post them as near to the skirts of the forest as he can without detection, and on the instant he hears my horn, to cut his way to my side, followed by all of you."

"What are you going to do?" asked Will.

"I shall to the town at once, and see what can be done to prolong the time," returned Robin, "But whatever is done must be done cautiously, for should the sheriff once learn that I am aware of the position of my men, he will expect rescue, and probably hang them in the castle, and thus prevent all our efforts to save the Joyhearts."

“On the other hand, I know that he has boasted should any of our number, especially I, fall into his hands, we shall be hanged on a gallows, in the town, as a warning and terror to all who thinly feel inclined to follow our example, and ourselves particularly included. He will, therefore, thinking the whole affair accomplished too speedily to reach my ears in time to prevent it, be induced to keep this vaunt, and endeavor to have them hung openly. It must be our object to do nothing to make him alter this opinion, for upon it rests our sole chance of rescuing the brothers. I will directly to Nottingham, learn all I can, and act accordingly. There is no time to lose – away with you!”

“We are gone!” cried Will. “I am glad of the chance of frustrating the blood-minded wishes of old Baron Fitz Alwine, if it was only for the relentless animosity he still bears his only child the Lady Christabel and her husband Allan-a-Dale. We will be at your call when you need us. Success attend our enterprise!”

So saying, accompanied by Much, he hurried away, while Robin hastened in the direction of Nottingham; but when a short distance from the outskirts of the wood, he met a mendicant pilgrim coming from the town. He stopped and accosted him. “What news from Nottingham, old man?” he inquired “is there anything stirring there today?”

“Ay, marry, is there!” replied the old man; “There’s stirring which will cause weeping and wailing in the town.”

“Indeed!” exclaimed Robin; “And what may that be?”

“It is that three of Robin Hood’s merrie men have been taken, and are to be hung in an hour from this time, without a hope of redemption but at the last day. The Lord have mercy on their souls!”

“The maiden has told me the truth,” muttered Robin; “I must be stirring. Ah! A thought strikes me; this beggar’s dress will serve me.”

“Old man,” he said aloud, “I have taken a whim to wear thy apparel. Wilt thou change it with me for the dress I wear?”

“Nay,” said the old man, “You jest with me.”

“Indeed I do not,” returned Robin: “I have taken a fancy to dress as thou art now, and I will give thee mine in exchange for’t, with forty shillings to boot, which thou mayst spend in ale, wine, or aught that pleases thee.”

“Your dress is good, without rent or tear, and bright and clean, as if ‘twere just new. Mine is torn, ragged, patched, and dirty,” said the old man, with gravity. “It is unnatural that thou shouldst desire to change with me – I’ll not believe thee. Thou wouldst fool me, youth. Learn from one who is aged, that he who laughs an old man to scorn lives to weep at others’ mockery.”

"You wrong me, old man – it is my wish to change with thee, and to prove it," cried Robin, producing the money, "Here are twenty pieces of gold I give thee, to support thy state when thou hast my dress on."

"Well, well," said the beggar, looking on the gold with something of the avarice of age in his glance, "Youth will be humoursome, an' if thy humor doth jump with wearing my apparel, it becomes not me to baulk the leap."

"That is well said," replied Robin, proceeding at once to make the exchange. "Thy hose are fashioned, I see, from circumstances," he continued, with a laugh, "and have gained a great many friends of their own nature since they were made, if I may judge by the quantity of pieces of which they are composed."

"Ha! ha! Laughed the old man, "They are like a Norman's conscience, well patched. But thy doublet is like a Saxon's heart, all of one piece of stuff."

"Good; thou say'st well," said Robin, dressing himself in the rags with all the speed he was master of, "and I must also, in commending thy wit, praise thy scorn of luxuries. No man can charge thee with having loved pride, after taking cognizance of thy habiliments, beshrew me! No one would doubt thou wert a religious mendicant, for thy garments are most holy."

With a little more banter of this sort, Robin completed his disguise. "Well," he cried, "a good habit makes a good looking man. By the Mass!" he muttered "were Marian to see me in this grab, she would not be so ready to call me her bonnie Robin."

"Am I to have thy weapons also?" demanded the old man.

"No good father," returned Robin, "I have a greater fancy for them than thy dress, so I shall retain them. And now let me give thee a piece of advice: keep away from the west of this wood, or from following my track – or thou mayst get into trouble. Thou hast my dress upon thy back, my gold in thy pocket — Take my advice and go."

"I thank thee, good youth" replied the old man, "I believe thy advice friendly, and shall follow it. An old man's benison on thee and thine acts, if they are good. A fair good day to you, gentle sir."

"Good day," replied Robin, and hastened on his way.

He unstrung his bow, and carried it as a wand. His sheaf, save a few arrows, he hid under some brushwood and thus equipped, leaning on a stout quarter staff, he entered the town. Wending his way at once towards the castle, he found he had little time to lose, for the gallows was completed, and as he was given to understand, the procession was ready to quit the castle.

But they were in a great quandary about a hangman, the regular 'Jack Ketch' being laid on a sick bed and quite unable to launch anyone into the eternity on whose verge he was himself. This was soon noised abroad, and it was said the three men could not be hung for want of hangman.

However, the cavalcade quitted the Castle, bearing the three unfortunate men in the midst of it, and took the road down the town to where the gallows had been erected. The truth of the rumor, which told of the want of a hangman, was made apparent by a proclamation being made for one who would undertake the office. Robin, who had edged himself in front of the Baron Fitz Alwine, who looked but little changed since he had last seen him, save that his aspect was a trifle more grim.

"Noble Sheriff, what wilt thou give me if I take upon myself the office?" he said, getting so very close to his lordship, that he retreated several paces, as though he doubted the savouriness of the scent arising from the clothes Robin wore.

"If thou wert to have some suits of clothes," he returned, surveying the beggar's garments with horrible distain, "It would be what thou most desires, and, therefore, beggar, six suits will I give thee, and the hangman's fee of thirteen pence, if thou wilt take the hangman's place."

"And how much more wilt thou give me if I hang thee into the bargain," demanded Robin, following the Baron up as he kept retreating, until at last he raised his stick and thrust it at Robin's ribs.

"Keep thy distance, beggar," he cried; "Thy perfume does not please me. It offends my nostrils exceedingly. Now keep thou there – what said'st thou?"

"You offer me six suits of thy apparel and thirteen pence," replied Robin, "to hang these poor men up. What wilt thou add to that fee, if I include thee and a few other rascally Normans?"

"Insolent dog, what meanest thou?" cried the sheriff, somewhat astonished at the remark, "Dost thou know to whom thou art speaking, that thou waggest thy tongue thus saucily? The curse of St. Paul on me, knave, an' thou has spoken thus to insult me, thou shalt make a fourth bird swinging on yonder tree."

"Mark you, sheriff," returned Robin, "I am a poor, ragged, miserably appareled man."

"*Miserably appareled*, indeed!" echoed the sheriff, elevating the tip of his nose, and depressing the corners of his mouth.

"But I possess the same sense of insult which you do; perhaps a keener one. I am naturally sensitive, and feel contempt and disdain as sharply as thou canst. You scrupled not to beg a favour of me, and at the same time insult me on account of my garb. Yet you, who hesitated not one second to do this, growl because I retaliated upon you."

"Foh!" exclaimed the Baron, "Thou silly beggar, thy wits are wandering. Darest thou compare thyself with me? Thou art a fool!"

"I am a poor man," said Robin, emphatically, "and I suppose I must bow to thy scorn."

"To be sure," returned the Baron; "All poor men have a right to do so – it becomes their situation. They have no business to be poor, and if they will be so, why of course they must take the consequence. But I am not here to bandy words with such as thee – if thou dost accept my offer, proceed upon thy duties at once."

"I cannot say I know what the duties are," said Robin, doing everything to gain time for his men to be at hand. "I was never a hangman in my life, the Holy Mother be praised! My curse upon the disgusting trade, and may he be cursed eternally who first made a hangman, or he that was one."

"Art thou fooling me all this time, varlet?" roared the Baron. "By the Mass! An' thou dost not commence thy work at once, thou shalt pay dearly for it."

"Suppose I do not consent to hang these yeomen, whom wilt thou get to undertake the office?" asked Robin, quietly. "Thou hast made thy proclamation. It has been heard by all. Some time hath elapsed, and yet thou seest I am the only one who has stepped forward to fulfill thy desires."

"I see what thou art aiming at, thou starved-looking wretch," exclaimed the sheriff, hastily, "Thou dost want an addition to the bounty already offered for swinging those knaves into the other world. Well, if thou dost thy work quickly, well, and neatly, I will give thee something in addition, which shall satisfy thee completely, or thou art the most unconscionable rogue on the face of the earth."

"No," returned Robin, "Thou art wrong, sheriff, I seek no such thing. I would not wear apparel that had once been on thy person. And as for thy hangman's fee, keep it, thou art the proper person to receive such money; for such coin should only be in the hands of the vilest wretch in existence – one viler than thou I cannot imagine."

"What!" articulated the Baron, as if Robin's words had been sledge hammers beating on his forehead, until he was completely stunned.

"I ask but what I'll have," exclaimed, Robin, quickly, "which is three blasts of this little horn, to speed their souls to heaven. But not the one you would send them, but to the one of a sudden and certain release from a shameful death."

As he ceased speaking he blew three loud, shrill blasts upon the born, and then sprung upon Baron Fitz Alwine. He threw him to the ground, drew a broad-bladed forest knife, and elevating it in the air, cried, in a loud voice –

"He who offers to move a step to injure me or those three yeomen who stand bound beneath the gallows tree, will cause the sheriff instant death, for so help me the Blessed Mary! If anyone stirs, I plunge this knife into his heart at once."

"Keep still, all of you," cried the Baron, in the voice of a stentor. "Good beggar, speak thy wants, and thou shalt have them." The sun glittered on the polished blade. Baron Fitz Alwine felt the strength of him who pinned him to the ground to be of a nature which would enable its possessor to carry out his intention of destroying him with the most perfect ease, long ere he could be prevented.

With the instinctive love of life so particularly implanted in him, he felt it would be very prudent to compromise, and therefore, he spoke his last speech to Robin in soft, conciliating tone.

"My wants or wishes are not great, and easily complied with. I came hither with the intention of having them granted to me, and I go not without they are. I require the lives of those three yeomen you are so desirous to hang."

"You ought to know, my good man, that I cannot grant your request," mumbled the Baron, in a suffocating tone of voice. "They have been stealing and killing the king's deer. You know, as everyone knows, that the crime is punished with death, without reprieve, as soon after they are taken as circumstances make it possible. The whole town of Nottingham is acquainted with my having these men in my possession, and if I suffer them to escape, the news will fly to the king's ear and then what would he say – aye, do to me?"

"I care not one jot," said Robin Hood. "The men are mine and I'll have them restored to me scatheless, whether you please or no. I only suggest to you it will be both the wisest and safest plan to comply at once with my request."

At this moment there was great commotion among the crowd, and then the noise of weapons clashing ensued. Robin knew that it was his men fulfilling his directions, and he suffered the Baron to sit up and witness their arrival. He did so with most unfeigned astonishment.

"What men are these?" he inquired, with a conviction that it was a question he scarce need ask.

"They are mine!" was the reply.

"And you are Robin Hood?" said he, as though such reply necessarily involved the rejoinder.

"I am he!" returned our hero, with a smile at the expression of the Baron's physiognomy.

Robin's men kept pouring in, the townspeople gladly making way for them, and the followers of Fitz Alwine not opposing them for want of orders to that effect. Will Scarlet and Much leaped through the crowd, and speedily unbound the Joyhearts, supplied them with weapons, and mixed them among the thronging merrie men, who presented a formidable appearance, their numbers far exceeding the sheriff's troops – a fact which Fitz Alwine was not slow to discover, for he was a prudent warrior, one who always avoided danger, and had a noble scorn for all positions which would compromise his personal safety for the mere gain of personal honour.

When he saw that it was utterly impossible to retake the yeomen, and likewise the only way to extricate himself safely from his present awkward situation was by conciliating Robin Hood, he turned to him and said –

"Take your men, take them along with you. You do as you list, there is not another in the country like you. Let me rise."

"There are no thanks due to you for your courtesy," replied Robin, raising him to his feet; "I may thank my trusty band for the safety of my three merrie men, not thee. However, let that pass."

"Thou'rt now upon thy feet again, Baron Fitz Alwine, but mark my words. A long time cannot elapse ere thou wilt be upon thy back in the cold tomb. This thou must know as well as I, for thou art no stranger to the limits of human life, and thy term hath expired – thou hast lived to the period at which life is wont to quit the frame, or in remaining degenerates the body and mind into imbecility, an existence like to the feeble rays of an expiring torch."

"Yet dost thou act as if thou wert in thy youth, and had a long term of years before thee to repent thy evil deeds, and to atone for them. Thou dost still continue as undeviatingly in thy path of blood as ever, and dost carry thy resentment to the same wicked lengths as heretofore. I would have thee beware, to alter thy nature wholly, and make a better use of the little time left thee to repair some of the villainies thou hast committed."

"Commence with seeking the daughter, the gentle Christabel, and entreating her forgiveness for thy unnatural conduct to her, and endeavor to make reparation for the many wretched unhappy hours you have created for her. Do this, and be earnest in thy endeavors, and thy death bed may yet be a comparatively peaceful one."

"But if you persist in thy present conduct, I forewarn you that you may have bitterly to repent it here and hereafter, and thy death, instead of being calm and tranquil, may be somewhat rude and untimely. Take my advice, which is offered thee in a good spirit. Think upon it, nor treat it scornfully because it comes from one who stands before thee in the position of a foe, and do your best to try and follow it. Now, begone, I have no more to say to thee than that thy presence is hateful to me. Away!"

Robin waved his hand haughtily to him, quitted him and summoned his men, bidding them lead on to the forest; and Fitz Alwine, with a face whose expression bore evidence of rage contending with fear, gathered his men together, and galloped at their head up the town to his castle, there to shut himself up, a prey to the torments of defeated malice.

The townspeople, who looked upon deer stealing as anything but a crime, who knew the family of the Joyhearts, by repute, many of them personally, were delighted at the escape of the three sons, and raised a cheerful shout of joy in honor of Robin Hood. Many pressed forward to shake hands with him – with the bold outlaw, who was so highly famed for being formidable to the people's foes, but gentle to the people. He, however, disliked any show of public estimation in his favour, and tore himself away from many who wished to force their kindness upon him, and in the midst of his merrie men was soon in the green wood again.

He had not penetrated far ere he encountered the Joyheart's sister and parents waiting to meet their rescued relatives. It was an affectionate sight to see the father and mother embracing their children with the most intense enthusiasm, and weeping, out of pure gladness, to hold again in their arms those whom they had thought lost to them forever. And mingling with their tears and exclamations of happiness, prayers of thankfulness for Robin's salvation of their boys.

Humbly, yet earnestly, did they pour forth, in words of unsophisticated truth and honesty, thanks for the joy he had given to their hearts; and the simple language of nature spoke more forcibly to him in their sincerity of expression, than the finest sentiments clothed in the highest flown language could have done. It was his greatest reward, natheless the satisfaction he would have received from his conscience having told him he had done right.



Chapter 6

*Go we to dyner, sayd Lytell Johan,
Robyn Hode sayd, Nay;
For I drede our Lady be wrothe with me,
For she sent me not my pay.
Have no dout, mayster, sayd Lytell Johan,
Yet is not the sonne at rest;
For I dare saye and saufly swere
The knight is trewe and trust.
But as they loked in Bernysdale
By the hye way,
Then were they ware of two blacke monkes,
Eche on a good palferay.
Then bespoke Lytell Johan,
To Much he gan say,
I dare my lyte to wedde
That these monkes have brought our pay.
-----Lytell Geste of Robyn Hode
The Fourth Fytte*

*The abbot sayd to his covent,
There he stode on ground,
This day twelfe moneth come there a kynght.
And borrowde foure hundred ponde.
It were grete pyté, sayd the pryoure,
So to have his londe,
And be ye so lyght of your conseynce,
Ye do to him moch wronge.
Thou art ever in my berde, sayd the abbot,
By God and St. Rycharde.
----- Lytell Geste of Robyn Hode
The Second Fytte*

Robin Hood, his beloved Marian, his friends, and merrie men, at the expiration of a twelve month from the time when Robin had behaved so handsomely to Sir Richard of the Lee, were again located in Barnsdale Wood, whose leafy dells and widely-spreading glades offered an agreeable change to Sherwood Forest. The day arrived upon which Sir Richard was to keep his knightly word, which he had solemnly pledged by a vow to the Blessed Virgin to perform truly, and Robin seated himself beneath his trysting tree to await his arrival. The hour at which the sun attains his greatest altitude was the appointed time for the meeting.

But the shades of the trees began to lengthen, and turn from pointing west to east, without the approach of Sir Richard of the Lee. Two hours passed beyond the appointment, and he was not there.

"He will not come," said Will Scarlet, who, with Little John, stood by Robin's side, and were waiting anxiously his coming.

"Then ought we to have no faith in man," returned Robin. "I would not that sir Richard broke his word for the sake of humanity. No man bore the resemblance of untainted integrity stronger than he did, and if he proveth false, whom may we believe? By the Holy Mass, I dread our dear Lady is wroth with me for some unconsidered act of mine, and thus is it Sir Richard comes not. When I have placed implicit trust in her, she hath never, until now, failed me."

"Have no doubt about his coming," exclaimed Little John. "The sun is not yet at rest, and I dare swear safely, by the Blessed Maid herself, that he is a true and honourable knight. He will be here anon, or I am no woodsman."

"I hope he will," ejaculated Robin, "for the sake of a Saxon's pledge. I will abide here the whole day, and if Sir Richard of the Lee fail of his vow, then will I trust no man's vow more. Take thy weapons, Little John and Will, and take Much with thee, and walk in the direction of St. Mary's Abby, and see whether thou canst discern the knight approach, or wealthy Norman, or poor man who may taste of our bounty. I will not dine today until I have some guest who shall in some way recompense me for the absence of Sir Richard of the Lee. Away with thee! I will abide here alone until thy return."

"As thou wilt," said Little John, "We will do thy bidding, and thou shalt soon again see us with a guest."

So saying, he beckoned Will and away they went, obeying his commands by searching out Much, and taking the direction he had pointed out for them to pursue.

"Robin Hood seems dull today," remarked Will.

"Why so?" inquired Much.

"Because he fears he shall be deceived in Sir Richard of the Lee," returned Little John.

"I do not see why he should care much about it," said Will. "We do not need the money."

"Pshaw!" cried Little John, almost angrily, "He has not one thought about the coin. It is that this Sir Richard is a Saxon, and being under great obligations to him, and being bound by a vow to the Holy Virgin to repay the loan granted him, appears not – not even to excuse himself if he

cannot pay the money. It is the ingratitude which wounds Robin's feelings, not the absence of the paltry gold, and as well as that a Saxon knight should forfeit his honor. But I still believe Sir Richard will be here."

"And here he comes, I have little doubt," cried Will suddenly hearing the footsteps of approaching horses, which the thickly studded trees hid from sight.

"St. Julian prove it so!" uttered Little John quickly.

Much ran forward to reconnoiter, but speedily returned, crying out –

"No, it is not he, but two black friars trotting cheerily along with near a dozen men at their heels.

"Ha!" exclaimed Little John, "a retinue at their heels, eh? Then have they a store of money with them. We must take them to dine with Robin."

"Shall I summon some of the merrie men?" asked Will.

"There is no need," returned Little John, "These monks' serving men's hearts are all in their legs and they are so much the slaves of their hearts, that they are sure to run away with them upon the appearance of any danger, as you shall see. So here come the monks and men. Now, we must take these monks to dinner with Robin, or never look him in the face again. We are but three, but our three shall exceed thirty such as those who come now. String your bows, bend them, and stand prepared to stop this goodly company."

Will Scarlet and Much did as Little John desired them, and stood with their bows bent, ready to receive the unconscious comers. As they turned round a winding corner of the highway, which had hidden them from the sight of Little John and his companions, they came plump upon our friends, the sight of whom, with their shafts ready to loose from their drawn bows, had a material effect upon their progress. Their steeds were instantly checked, and the monks, who were leading the way, immediately made a movement to gain the rear. They were however, stayed by Little John, who called out in a loud voice –

"Abide where thou art, monk! Abide, or by our Lady, if thou dost attempt to move further, this shaft upon my bow shall bring thee certain death. List ye – I speak in earnest, I hold thy life or death in my hand."

The monk, obedient to Little John's command – for he thought that he looked as if he had not the fear of God and the Church in his eyes, and spoke every much as if he really meant to do what he said if he did not comply with his wish – resigned himself to what was to come with as much calmness as he could assume. He checked his steed, he crossed his hands upon his breast, and making up a most amiable face, said in a voice replete with meekness –

"Gentle stranger, what wouldst thou with a humble and lowly servant of the Holy Church?"

"Beshrew thee for a laggard," said Little John, gruffly, annoyed by the sanctimious cant the monk had assumed; "Thou has kept my lord fasting these three hours waiting for thee. I would have thee quicken thy speed, and that of thy ghostly companions, as dinner waits thee."

"Thy converse is an enigma to me – I prithee, friend, expound," said the monk, in a very mild tone.

"Expound!" echoed Little John, "Anan."

"Thou speakest of thy master, and of his waiting dinner for me and my saintly comrade," rejoined the monk; "I know nothing of what thou speakest. Who is thy master, friend?"

"Robin Hood," said Little John, laconically.

There was an immediate movement among the monk's followers, very strongly indicative of considerable apprehension. Some of them, who felt a little more courageous than the others, and were preparing to advance to disperse our friends, no sooner heard this announcement than they dropped quietly back to the rear, and got themselves ready for instant flight, casting looks of doubt and alarm on all sides, as if they expected to see, in every shrub and bush, one of Robin's merrie men.

"Robin Hood!" ejaculated the monk, speaking in his natural tone – one more harsh than musical. "He is a strong, sturdy thief, of whom no man ever heard good."

"Thou lvest, monk, in thy teeth!" cried Little John, fiercely; "Thou shalt rue uttering it. Mark ye! He is noble in blood and in deeds, and I would advise no man to say other in my presence, or if he doth, let him beware my quarter staff. My noble master hath bidden thee to dine with him, he hath waited long for his dinner, and I do not purpose lengthening the time by parleying with thee."

"Therefore, prepare thou and thy monkish companion to come with us. As for thy followers, they may return from whence they came, and if they list to do it now, they shall go free and unharmed, but if they remain or offer to oppose my will, then must they prepare to meet their Maker, for they will be helped to a speedy death. Away, those who love their lives. Those who wish for a hasty death, stay. Will and Much, bring down the first man who shows an intent to stay."

Much and Will, who had dropped their bows during the converse, immediately upon hearing Little John's words, raised them and drew their arrows to the head. Had a bombshell suddenly dropped among the followers, and they perfectly aware of the terrible effects arising from its

explosion, they could not have turned their horses' heads and scampered away with greater speed than they did when they saw the three bows raised and presented to them. Each man felt as though one of these long shafts was quivering through him, and spurred his horse furiously with the hope of getting out of the danger as soon as possible.

The monks were about to follow the example of the flying escort, but Little John stopped them and seizing the bridle of each horse, he prepared to lead the way to the trysting tree. There were two servants who stayed behind when the rest fled, one a groom who had the care of a sumpter horse heavily laden, and one a slight youth who acted as a page to the elder monk. They stayed behind, and, upon explaining what they were, they were suffered to remain. In the custody of Will Scarlet and Much, they followed Little John to the trysting tree.

When they reached it, they found Robin seated under it listlessly and alone, Marian was away at Barnsdale Hall with the family of the Gamwells, and he, disappointed at the nonappearance of the knight, felt dull and dispirited. But he no sooner observed Little John and his companions than his countenance brightened – he doffed his cap and made the monks a bow, which, when they saw, concluding he was not Robin Hood, they did not in any way acknowledge. Little John felt exasperated at this, and cried –

“Never heed him, Robin, they are churls. By dear worthy God, these monks are churlish dogs, without kind words to the poor, or good breeding to any.”

“No matter,” returned Robin; “These saintly folks have no courtesy but for the wealthy or the strong. I know them well and expect no other. Whom have ye there, Will? A sumpter horse, attended by a groom and page!”

“Yes!” replied Will, who was still laughing, and had been convulsively and continuously at the sudden dispersion of the monks' attendants. “Yes, these are two out of more than a dozen who thought there might be some danger in a stringed bow, so galloped away directly they saw one.”

“Most prudent men they,” laughed Robin. “Well, my worthy monks, you must be as hungry after your ride as I am with waiting. We will at once to dinner.”

Thereupon he drew forth his bugle, blew a blast which summoned the merrie men around him, and gave directions to have the dinner spread, a command which was speedily obeyed. While it was being prepared, Robin observed both monks gazing upon his people, himself, indeed everything, with an expression of grievous fear. He spoke to the elder, or superior of the two.

"Fear not, monk" he exclaimed; "No harm will come to thee, thou mayst partake of what is spread before thee cheerily and without restraint. When thou art at home, where is thy abbey? What is its name?"

"St. Mary's Abbey," returned the monk, "and though I am habited and attended simply now, yet am I there the high cellarer."

"Then, sir high cellarer, you are right welcome," observed Robin. "You shall give me your opinion upon my wine, you must needs be a good judge; you shall taste our venison too, cooked in the forest fashion. My life on't, you will not say a fasting man should scorn it."

The monk did not offer a contrary opinion, but sat down to his dinner with an appetite which did credit to the food placed before him. The wine, he confessed, was of exceeding good vintage, and by no means to be despised, albeit it was drunk under an oak tree in the green wood.

"It is a matter of great marvel to me," exclaimed Robin, "that I should be expecting one who was bound to be with me this day by a vow to the Holy Virgin, that he should not have come, and in lieu of him thou should be here, who are of her abbey. I dread that our dear Lady is wroth with me, or him I expected would have come, unless, thy abbot hath done him some foul wrong. If he hath, let him beware Robin Hood."

"Our blessed Lady hath kept her faith with thee," interposed Little John. "She hath sent, you perceive, two especial messengers with the money from her own abbey."

"Marry," replied Robin Hood, with a smile, "Thou'rt right, Little John. Friend monk, our dear Lady was the security of one to whom beneath this tree I lent a small sum of money. He was to have met me here today to have returned it. He hath not come, but I can well believe that thou are a messenger from our gracious Lady come to pay me. If thou hast the money, let me have it, and at some future day, should you need help, you may call upon me and have it."

"By the divinity of our holy patron," swore the monk, "I never heard before of this debt, or even such a securityship. By my faith, but it is not a security which would satisfy me."

"I make mine avow to God, monk," cried Robin, sternly, "That thou speakest profanely, nay, impiously, of the holy dame, thy patron. Thou has told me with thine own tongue, and thou canst not say nay thou didst not, that thou wert her holy servant. Each hour of thine is spent in her service, therefore speak thou not slightly of her. She hath this day made thee a messenger to me to pay the money for which she was security. She is a gentle lady and true, and maketh me not wait even a day for my due. I owe thee thanks for coming this day, which I shall render thee when thou hast done thy duty. What hast thou in thy coffers?"

“What have I in my coffers?” repeated the monk, perfectly aghast at the question, “I have but very little. I can assure thee.”

“What is the amount?” asked Robin.

“The amount – a – is – twenty merks, and no more, so may I thrive as I speak truth,” said the monk, stammering.

“Twenty merks!” ejaculated Robin, looking steadfastly at him, as if he would read him though. “If thou hast spoken truth monk, not one penny of it will I touch. It is a sorry sum for such as thee, and if thou needs more, I will lend it to thee. But if thou has not told me the truth, and in thy mail there is more than the sum thou hast stated, every coin of it shalt thou lose. Little John, go thou and see if he has told the truth. If there is but twenty merks, I touch no penny of it. If more, it must be ours.”

Little John hasted away on his mission, and the monk’s face, naturally red, grew to the colour of scarlet, his eyes watered, he puffed and blew, and phew’d, vowed ‘it was very hot!’ and looked altogether horribly confused.

As he saw Little John returning he dropped his eyelids down and commenced plucking the grass by his side, then took a long pull at the wine cup and when Little John arrived, his confusion became painfully apparent. He essayed a smile, but conscience treated him to such a pinch at the moment, that, instead of a smile, his features were distorted to a grin, which, from its exceedingly ugly character, was wonderfully expressive of anguish.

“What success, Little John?” demanded Robin when he had arrived; “Is the monk so poor as he tells me?”

“I don’t know whether he be poor,” he replied, “but he is a true messenger from our dear Lady, for she hath sent you double thy loan. I have counted eight hundred golden merks from out the monk’s mail and a handful or so into the bargain.”

“I was sure she would not fail me,” said Robin, with a laugh; “Our Lady is the truest of women. I tell thee, monk, thou mightst search all England through and find me no better security. Fill up the cups, we will drink honour to our dear Lady. In thy prayers, monk, greet her for me, and say, should she ever need the aid of Robin Hood, he will not fail her.”

“Thou must needs find her good security,” responded the monk, “if thou dost take what thou has lent from anyone who hath money, and who knows nothing whatever of thy transactions but what thou chooseth to tell them. I think it would have been quite as well if our Lady had let me into the secret why and to whom I was carrying the money. Beshrew me but I thought I was taking it to London for quite another purpose.”

“And for what purpose didst thou think thou wert carrying it?” inquired Robin.

“A *great mote* [*ward meeting, court*] is to be holden there a few days hence,” rejoined the monk: “Our abbot and prior have been much wronged by our reeves, and I was on my way hither to have a settlement with them.”

“And instead, you have had a settlement with me” laughed Robin.

“There is yet another coffer to search,” said Little John. “Shall I see what it contains?”

“No,” said Robin, “I am content with the one, let the others pass untouched. Now, sir monk, having treated you thus courteously, you are free to depart when you please.”

“I do not call it being treated courteously, to be invited to dinner and afterwards cleared of all one’s money.”

“It is our old custom,” said Robin. “We serve you with a good dinner, a right plentifulness of wine, and we make you pay for it, as they would at any hostel. It is our manner to leave little behind when we search for the wherewithal to pay the bill incurred.”

“Nay, ‘fore God,” said the monk, shaking his head rather sadly, “I rue me that I came near thee to dine. In Dankastere or Blythe I might have dined cheaper and better.”

“Not better,” said Robin.

“Well, but much cheaper, and so it would have been better,” moaned the monk. “I must now return again to St. Mary’s Abbey. Our Holy Patron keep me! What shall I say to the abbot and prior?”

“Greet me to them,” said Robin; “they know of me. The Bishop of Hereford hath acquainted them with my name. Greet me to them, and tell them I would be glad if they would send me such a monk to dinner every day. Here is the *stirrup cup* [*One for the road*]. Hie thee home with a glad heart that thou hast been honoured by our Lady so as to be her special messenger.”

The monk mounted on his steed, accompanied by his groom and little page, and his brother monk, who said nothing, did nothing, but eat and drink, nearly all the while he was there. After draining the cup of wine proffered by Robin as a stirrup cup, he bade him farewell, and galloped sorrowfully back in the direction of St. Mary’s Abbey.

“Now, blessed be the Holy Virgin for keeping her word thus rightfully,” exclaimed Little John; “If Sir Richard of the Lee is not here, his money is, and that will answer almost the same purpose.”

"Indeed no," observed Robin, quickly. "I had rather he had been here coinless, than he should keep away from his bond, and that monk come in lieu with thrice eight hundred golden marks. I am loath to find there are Saxons who cannot keep faith –"

He was here interrupted by the sudden appearance of sturdy George-a-Green, who ran hastily down the glade, and said –

"Noble master, a knight cometh speeding along the highway, followed by at least a hundred men armed to the teeth – shall we prepare to stay them?"

"Are they Normans?" hastily he enquired.

"You seldom see us poor Saxons so well fashion-ed as are these men who are approaching," replied George-a-Green.

"Up then, my merrie men. To your bows, to your bows and coverts – quick, away with ye! These Normans must be taught there are still true-hearted Saxon yeomen ready to oppose them, and prevent their taking any path they choose. Fit an arrow to each of your bows, but do not discharge one until I give you the signal. Away all of ye."

"Will you not retire with us?" asked Little John.

"No," returned Robin, "I will remain, meet them, and see who and what they are."

"Then I will stay by your side," said Little John; "Should these Normans be sportively inclined, they will just think thee some Saxon, and make a target of thee with their arrows. They will not be so frolicsomenly inclined if one stays with thee."

"Nor if two do," interposed Will; "I will therefore, stay with thee, Robin."

"It is needless, these Normans may have the will, but decidedly they have not the power, to hit always at what they aim, even if he be a Saxon," said Robin; "However, do as ye list – it matters not whether three or one meet them."

The merrie men had all at his command retired, and not a vestige of them was to be seen. Robin was seated upon the green turf beneath the trysting tree, and by his side, apparently in luxurious listlessness, lay Little John and Will Scarlet, awaiting the coming of this unexpected body of men. They had not long to wait, for down they came, pouring round the corner of the glade, and when within arrowshot; the leader pricked his steed into a hard gallop up to the spot where Robin was seated.

"It is Sir Richard of the Lee!" cried the three, simultaneously.

"Holy Mother! I thank thee," exclaimed Robin, springing to his feet. "The Saxon has kept his faith."

The knight, as Robin rose, drew up his steed, flung himself from its back, and running up, caught Robin by both hands, and squeezed them fervently.

“God save thee, Robin Hood,” he cried, “God save thee! I am glad to have met thee.”

“God save thee, Sir Richard,” responded Robin Hood, “Welcome to the green wood, thou gentle knight, I am right glad to see thee, for the sake of thy knightly word, which, by a vow to the Holy Virgin, didst thou pledge to me.”

“I would have come to thee, Robin, if I had been penniless, returned the knight; “and having the money to return to thee, it is unlikely I should break my oath.”

“Hast thou thy lands again?” inquired Robin.

“I have, thanks to God and thee, Robin Hood. My lands are again in my possession, and have been for some time ago. I should have been here earlier, but that I was detained by an event which I will relate to thee anon.”

“Are these thy people?” asked Robin, as a hundred men drew up a short

distance from Sir Richard of the Lee, all dressed in handsome dresses of the period, and well armed with weapons of the best make and fashion, all new.

“They are at present,” returned the knight. “May I ask some refreshment of thee for them? They have had a fatiguing day, and need something. They are all Saxons, and picked men good men and true, as I have proved them.”

“They shall know what green wood hospitality is,” said Robin, summoning his people, who thronged from all parts of the glade immediately they heard his horn.

“My merrie men,” he said, “These strangers are brother Saxons; they are tired and hungry. Show them how we treat those we love when we get them in our forest home.”

The men with the greatest alacrity prepared to comply with Robin’s wishes. They soon spread a dainty repast before them, unclothed the horses, rubbed them down, walked them about, and then fed them — paid at the same time every attention to their riders, who soon showed themselves to be as happy as anyone in their situation could wish to be.



Sir Richard Keeps His Promise

Robin drew Sir Richard to another part, and there, after he had made a hearty meal, he prepared to relate everything he was assured Robin wished to know. He had greeted both Little John and Will Scarlet warmly upon meeting with them, and he requested they should be at his side when he told his tale – a request which was instantly complied with, and he commenced thus:

“I cannot describe to thee the feelings with which I quitted you on this day twelvemonth. My heart seemed too light for my body. Albeit the horse you gave me was one of the swiftest I was ever on, and the one I had ridden and was then leading as a sumpter horse was very fast, and I put them on their mettle, still I fancied we went slowly. However, I arrived at my castle with foaming steeds. I was met by my dear wife at the hall door.”

“I caught her in my arms, and exclaimed “We are saved! We are saved!” she burst into tears of joy, and nigh fainted with excess of feeling. We summoned our children, who had been wandering about the chambers and the grounds like specters, and communicated to them the blissful tidings.”

“And who was this good and kind friend, who had created all this happiness for them?” they asked, with overflowing hearts. I bid them guess; and they guessed many to whom I had applied in vain. At last I told them it was thee, Robin – Robin Hood the outlaw, I said — a stranger, who hath done that for me which none other dear friends – as they professed to be – would, and he, simply because he deemed me an unfortunate, whom he thought he had a right to succor.”

“They would scarce credit my tale, although they had frequently heard so much good of thee, and when I assured it was so, they went down on their knees and prayed God to grant you all the happiness you had bestowed on them. I could scarce keep my son from coming to seek you out, and thank you as warmly as he felt your kindness, but I showed him that, like a truly generous heart, you disliked to hear of your good deeds.”

“Suppose you skip all this part, and come to the abbot of St. Mary’s at once,” interrupted Robin.

“All in good time,” said the knight, smiling, “I will not distress thee by speaking too much in thy praise, but thou must hear how thy conduct to me was received. The gentle Lilas grew quite eloquent in thy favor, and argued strongly that Herbert should seek thee out, but ultimately I was successful, and persuaded him to stay until you come to the Lee, and then he would be better able to show thee how he appreciated what you had done for us. He reluctantly assented, and on the next morning I prepared to go to the Abbey. I did not hurry myself, in order that the abbot might not deem me too eager, and so think that I had nearly lost my

property, which was saved by some unlooked-for event. For if he had formed such an opinion, I knew well enough that he would take every advantage he could of it. While on my way there, the abbot said in the refectory, as I afterwards learned, unto the prior —”

“This day twelvemonth, a knight, whose estate lieth not far from this, borrowed four hundred merks upon it of me, which upon this day he was to repay me with interest. If he cometh not, the estates are mine. Now, I conceive the day is from noon to noon; and therefore, if he is not here by noontide, I shall consider the day is gone, and the property mine.”

“It is fully early for such an agreement,’ replied the prior. ‘The poor man who hath the money to pay, even him who is in the strait, should have the benefit of the few hours which embrace the daylight. I would rather, for his sake, pay a hundred merks down now, that he had the grace of another twelvemonth, than you should hastily seize upon his estate. He may be away from England, where his right of dwelling, of home, is, and passing wretched days, the victim, probably, of cold and hunger and miserable sleepless nights. It is a pity thus early to claim his land. I would not be so light of conscience were I you. You do him much wrong, and, as members of the Holy Church, it is our duty to lighten, as much as we can, the weary load of woe our suffering brethren bear.”

“By God and St. Richard!’ cried the abbot, wrathfully, ‘Thou’rt ever bearding me. I wist thou had best keep thy counsel for his palate whom it pleaseth – it is not good to mine. You forget the abbey will receive the benefit of an addition of four hundred golden marks per annum to its income.”

“At this time the high cellarer, who knew all the affairs of the neighboring estates, entered the refectory. ‘Has thou heard aught of Sir Richard of the Lee?’ demanded the abbot of him.”

“He is either dead or hanged,’ said the monk sneeringly; ‘for nought have I heard of him, and this day I know his estates become thine. By the Mass! Holy abbot, we shall be all the better for his four hundred merks annually.”

“The lord high justice is staying with me,’ said the abbot; ‘I will ask him if I cannot claim the estates an’ he be not here by noon.”

“The high justice was sought, and for a handsome consideration, in bright golden coin, he was of the abbot’s opinion.”

“He will not come at all today, I dare wager,’ said he; ‘Therefore thou mayst well esteem the estates thine.”

“He had scarce uttered the words when I reached the gate. I had clothed myself even in the same apparel in which thou didst see me last year, and the few men I took with me I also clad poorly, but cleanly. As we

came to the gates, the porter saw us arrive. He came to the gate to welcome my arrival. He had formerly experienced my bounty, and the poor fellow was grateful. He made me acquainted with what had transpired – which, to say truth, I had somewhat expected, and had thus meanly clad myself in order, if the abbot should endeavor to play me false, to pay him his money, clothe myself and my men in gay clothing which we brought with us, laugh the abbot to scorn, and ride gaily home.”

“‘Welcome, good Sir Richard,’ cried the porter; ‘My lord the abbot, with the prior and many lords and gentlemen, are here to wait your arrival – they say out of love for thee — of that thou mayst judge thyself. I hope thou has the money, and will not have to trust to their affection. By our Holy Dame! Thou has a noble steed; let me send him to the stable that he may be cared for after his journey.’”

“‘Now, by Him who died on the tree, nor him or any of my company,’ I cried ‘shall go in there.’”

“As I entered the abbot’s hall unattended, I saw it nigh filled with ecclesiastics and gentles, to consult upon seizing my estates. They were astounded at the sight of me, as though I had been some foul apparition who had suddenly started up to blast them. With a mock humility I knelt down and saluted them; which, when I had done, I said—”

“‘You see, sir abbot, I have come here today, as I appointed.’”

“‘Hast thou brought me the money?’ he asked quickly.”

“‘Not a penny of it,’ I rejoined, enjoying the smile of gratification which played over his features.”

“‘Thou art an unfortunate debtor,’ he replied; and turning to the justice, said in a low tone, which, however, I heard, ‘Congratulate me, my Lord Justice.’”

“He then fixed his eyes again upon me, and said, ‘What dost thou here, knight, not having brought with thee the money to redeem thy estate?’”

“‘To pray a longer day,’ I rejoined.”

“‘Thy day is today, thine agreement was to pay me today – failing in that, thy estates are mine,’ he replied nervously, and said to the justice, ‘Thou wilt befriend me with thy counsel, wilt thou not? The estates are mine; is it not so?’”

“‘They are,’ said the justice. ‘Thou has broken thy agreement, sir knight, and the lands now are none of thine.’”

“‘Good sir abbot’ I exclaimed ‘Be thou my friend, as thou hast promised to be. Hold my lands in thy hand until I can repay thee the four hundred merks, and when I can do so, restore them to me. I will, in consideration of thy showing me that kindness, be thy servant, serving thee truly until I have the money to pay thee.’”

“‘Thou talkest to the winds.’ cried the abbot with a great chuckle. ‘I swear by the Holy Saints, get thee land where thou mayst, thou gettest none from me.’”

“‘By our dear Lady, then,’ I said, ‘albeit thou thinkest thou hast my lands safe in thy grasp, I’ll teach thee that thou art right woefully mistaken, for I will have them from thy un-Christian claws, however, dearly they may be bought.’”

“‘Thou speakest unwisely,’ said the justice; ‘not paying the money thou has borrowed loseth thee thine estates, and thou canst not again have them by purchase, however great thine offer, if the holy abbot refuseth to part with them.’”

“‘The Holy Virgin speed us!’ I said; ‘but it is well to assay a friend ere you trust him, in case, when you have need of one, that you may not find him you have trusted play thee false, as thou hast me, sir abbot!’”

“‘Thou art a poor wretch – a coinless hound. Darest thou beard me in my hall before these noble folk?’ cried the abbot, with wrath. ‘Out upon thee for a false knight! Speed thee out of my hall, dog!’”

“‘Thou liest, abbot!’ I cried, springing to my feet, ‘Thou liest, here in thy hall I tell thee. I was never in thought or act a false knight. He lies most foully who dares say I was ever and thou, to thy other bad qualities, can add a want of courtesy, or thou hadst not let a knight kneel so long in thy hall.’”

“‘Thou didst not kneel all the while that converse passed between you?’ interrupted Robin Hood.

“‘I did,’ returned the knight, ‘but it was only to try the extent of his charity and goodwill towards his human brethren, and miserably did he show himself deficient. ‘I have been in jousts and tournaments,’ I cried to him, ‘and have been esteemed as gentle and as noble as any there. As for my estates, think you the king, who knows the value of land as well as any in the kingdom, will suffer thee to retain my land for a paltry four hundred merks? You know him better. You know he would take them from thee and give me a larger price himself. Or restore them.’”

“‘What more will you offer him?’ said the lord high justice, in an audible whisper; ‘you had better give him more and obtain a release from him, or I dare swear that you will never hold his lands quietly and peacefully!’”

“‘One hundred merks,’ said the abbot, gnawing his fingers with anxiety to know what the issue of my interview with him would prove.”

“‘Give him two,’ suggested the justice, ‘the lands are worthy of it, and it is more likely to keep him quiet.’”

“I will give thee two hundred merks,” said the abbot, following the Justice’s advice, “in addition to the four hundred thou already hast, so that thou do give me a true and proper assignment of thy estate, and a quittance of all claim upon them.”

“Though you would give me two thousand more,’ I cried, moved to wrath by their base efforts to cheat me out of my inheritance, ‘you should be no nearer having them than ye are at the present moment. I will never own for my heir, nor abbot, justice, nor friar. Behold, here is thy gold’ I exclaimed, producing it.”

“Here are the four hundred merks thou didst lend me, but not one penny more. Hadst thou have acted courteously to me, thou shouldst, beside, the four hundred thou hast received as interest already, have been paid an additional sum. But not one shadow of a merk more shalt thou have but the sum thou didst lend me. Look you, sir abbot, here are four hundred merks I tender these in open court, the dial telleth that the hour of noon hath not yet arrived, so in spite of thy base subterfuges, abbot, the lands are again mine. I have kept my agreement, nor can you or those men of law gainsay it.’ With that I placed the money at the abbot’s feet. He looked thunder stricken. You cannot conceive how he rolled his head on one side, and stared with an expression of idiotic astonishment. However, I heeded it not – I stalked haughtily from the hall, bending neither to the right nor left, but gaining the porter’s lodge, I attired myself in more knightly habiliments, and my men also clothed themselves in dresses becoming the followers of a wealthy knight.”

“I then returned to the abbot’s hall, accompanied by my men, and my change of attire seemed to strike all present with fresh wonder. I advanced to the center to the center of the hall, and in a loud voice said —

“My lord high justice, I address myself to thee, to answer the only question which I have need before this company to ask, and as truly as thou wilt have to answer to thy Maker hereafter, so truly do thou answer to me what I shall ask of thee: Having kept unto my agreement and paid the whole of my liabilities, are not the estates again mine?”

“They are,’ replied the justice, reluctantly.”

“It is enough, I cried, and I walked singing out of the hall.”

“I was met at the gates of my castle by my wife, Herbert and Lilas.”

“Be merry,” I cried, “Be happy, and pray for Robin Hood! I pray that all his life may be as blessed as our present moments are! Had it not been for him we had been beggars. I have paid the abbot his loan, I have the lord high justice’s acknowledgement that my estates are again free and unencumbered, and now it shall go hard but Robin Hood shall find I

remember what he has done for me and those depended on me. With a little industry, my estate soon yielded thy loan: it also has enabled me to make you the accompanying present – it consists of a hundred cypress yew bows, strung and fashioned after the best manner, a hundred sheafs of arrows of equal goodness – the heads of the arrows are brightly burnished, and everyone an ell long, the feathers are peacock's, and notched with silver, a hundred men also, well clothed, well armed with stout steeds, well caparisoned. All these, with the five hundred golden marks I pray thee to accept."

"I should be doing myself a great wrong were I to take them," said Robin, the water springing into his eyes, and pressing his hand warmly, "I thank thee for them full as heartily as though, needing them greatly, thou hadst given them to me. Know that that same high cellarer of whom you spoke hath dined with me today, and paid eight hundred golden merks for his dinner – a strange coincidence that you should have paid his master the same sum on this same day a twelvemonth preceding. I never receive money twice. I took the monk's money as thy payment so keep thou the four hundred merks, and take back the present, applying it to thine own use."

"Nor think me ill spoken if I tell thee I know thine estate must have been improverished by all these demands upon it, and beshrew me if I will add to the number of those who have done it. Think yourself under no obligation to me, and if thou dost list, deem what thou hast brought to me as a present from me to thee, and in that spirit convey it home. Let us speak no more of it."

"What made thee so late in thy arrival today?"

"Thou hast a noble manner of doing things," replied the knight evidently affected by Robin's conduct to him, "and I will not cramp thy generous nature by insisting on thy acceptance of what I have brought, but take it again as thou desirest, as a gift from thee whom I esteem above all men. I can see that all these thanks disconcert thee, so I will no more of them, but proceed to tell thee what detained me."

"On my way hither, I came past a spot where there was a meeting of some of the best yeomen of the best country at a wrestling match. The prize contended for was a white bull, a courser, a saddle and a bridle studded with burnished gold, a pair of gauntlets, a gold ring, and a pipe of wine. The best man against all comers was to bear this rich prize away. I stopped to see the last of the play, and one yeoman stood against all comers. He was honestly the winner, but he was recognized as a follower of thine."

"Ha! of mine!" said Robin. "What was his name?"

"Gaspar-a-Tin," replied the knight.

“What, the jolly tinker? Beshrew me, he did well to wrestle successfully against all comers from the west country. And he gained the prize?” said Robin Hood.

“He gained it,” answered the knight. “but they refused it him because he was thy follower. He stoutly and fearlessly maintained his right, and when some spoke disparagingly of thee, by the Mass! He laid about him in right earnest, and made the speakers repent their hasty words. Knives were drawn and he would speedily have been slain, but for love of thee and all thy friends, I rode among them with my men, and dispersed those who sought to slay him, or deprive him of what he had fairly won. I put him in possession of what he had won. I gave him five merks for the wine, and bade it be broached for those who liked to taste it. Giving the yeoman the benefit of my escort, we came on to the green wood and that was the only reason why I was so late ere I arrived.”

“Sir Richard of the Lee, the man who befriends a yeoman is my friend,” said Robin, and hadst thou done nought else, I should have had good cause to be glad it was in my power to serve thee – it may be again, either with hand or coffer. Never fear to seek me when thou dost need me, and thou shalt always find me as desirous to prove thy friend as I have done, or as thou couldst wish me.”

“I shall treat thee as a true friend. I shall think thee as such – pray for thee as such – and act to thee as such, now and forever, while I live, so help me Holy Mary in my hour of strait!” cried Sir Richard, with fervent enthusiasm.

“Amen!” cried Little John and Will Scarlet.

The day was spent in delightful harmony. Sir Richard accompanied Robin, attended by Little John and Will Scarlet, to the Hall, and met with all the family there. He could not but smile at the many wives who were presented to him, nor help being struck with the sight of so much beauty. Will drew him on one side after introducing Maude, and in a whisper asked him if he ever, in the whole course of his existence, saw any one so perfect as she? The knight laughed, and said gently, it would show a want of gallantry in him towards the rest of the ladies were he to answer the question as he seemed to desire, and therefore he trusted he would excuse him saying all he thought. Will was quite satisfied with the answer, and went and kissed Maude, with a conviction that he was the luckiest as well as happiest fellow in the universe in possessing so sweet a creature. The hours glided cheerfully away, and as night drew on, Sir Richard took an affectionate leave of all, and attended by a party of Robin's men to lead the way, followed by his troop which he had brought to Robin as a present, he was shortly again within the walls of his own castle.

Chapter 7

*Until they came to the merry green wood
Where they had gladdest to bee,
There they were ware of a wright yeoman,
That leaned against a tree.
A sword and dagger he wore by his syde,
Of many a man the bane,
And he was clad in his capull hyde,
Top, and tayl, and mane.
And Scarlette he was flying a foote,
Fast over stock and stone,
For the proud sheriffe with seven score men
Fast after him is gone.
One shoote now I will shoote, quoth John,
With Christ his might and mayne,
I'll make yond sheriffe that wends soe fast,
To stopp he shall be fayne.
Sayes, lye there, lye there, now Sir Guye,
And with me be not wrothe,
Iff thou have had the worst strokes at my hand,
Thou shalt have the better clothe.
Robin did off his gown of greene,
And on Sir Guye did throwe,
And he put on that capull hyde,
That clad him topp to toe.
----- Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne*

It has been ascertained by the Sheriff of Nottingham that Robin Hood with half his men were away in Yorkshire, and he conceived with some shrewdness that it would be possible, with a sufficient number of men, to make an attack upon the merrie men who still remained – clear the wood of them – destroy the haunt – and lie in wait for Robin and the remainder of the men when they returned.

He sent to London for a reinforcement of troops, making out a strong case of necessity for them, and they were sent to him. He organized them after his own fashion, and sent them out into the green wood under the command of him who had brought the men from London. The merrie men, from being connected with so many in Nottingham town, soon were aware of what was in store for them. They concerted measures accordingly, and disposed themselves to receive the troop, who marched on sanguine of success.

But when they had arrived at the spot, where the men had prepared to meet them, they were welcomed with a shower of arrows, which committed dreadful slaughter. It was followed by a second and third, each arrow telling with a dreadful precision of aim, without the assailed knowing from whence the shafts came.

Then the merrie men rushed forth from their coverts with great shouts, and cut down all who offered resistance. A panic seized the troop at this sudden and terrible attack, and they fled without striking a blow – in the greatest disorder – into Nottingham, with the loss of nearly half their men. Not one of the merrie men received a hurt.

They gathered the bodies of those whom they had slain together, and in the night they bore them into the town, and laid them down at the castle gates, bidding the high sheriff pay them a visit in the green wood, and they would bring him home in the same fashion, an invitation which, had he received, he would have had no hesitation in at once declining. He was horror-stricken at his ill success, and, while in the midst of his wailing at his misfortune, a Norman, whom he had known at Rouen, called to see him with a stout body of men. To him Fitz Alwine detailed his disaster, and repeated a lying history of the way Robin Hood had served him several times, and excused his own failures by swearing that Robin and his men were invincible.

“Were he the devil himself,” said his friend, who was called Sir Guy of Gisborne, from an estate he possessed there, “an’ I took it into my head to pull his horns off, I would do it.”

“Not if they were Robin Hood’s”, said the Baron, who hoped to egg Sir Guy to undertake an enterprise against the bold outlaw.

“If they were the devil’s, I tell you,” cried Sir Guy, “an’ it pleased me to do it.”

“Well,” returned Fitz Alwine, speaking in a careless tone, “I never knew the man who would not quail before Robin Hood.”

“Then you never knew me,” cried Sir Guy, with an expression of scorn.

“Oh ho!” laughed Fitz Alwine, “he would make you quail like all the rest.”

“Pshaw!” roared Sir Guy; “It is not in the power of mortal or devil to do it. I defy them both alike. Let me meet this Robin Hood, and I will cut off his ears, slit his nose, and hang him like a swine by the feet.”

“By the Mass, then,” exclaimed the Baron, “I wish thou couldst meet with him. If thou wert able to do that, it would be serving me mightily.”

“Tell me where he is to be found, and I will undertake it, my head be the forfeit if I fail” cried Sir Guy.

“I have little doubt but it will,” said Fitz Alwine, “for I think it is not in man’s power to conquer him.”

"You will see," said he contemptuously. "Where is this mighty man to be found?"

"He is in Barnsdale wood, some two days' journey hence. I will accompany thee, and join my men with thine. He has only half his crew there, and if we approach cautiously we shall have all snugly."

"Be it so," returned Sir Guy; "But I will don a yeoman's dress and seek him single-handed, and then you shall find whether he or I am the most invincible."

Delighted that he had such an assistant, Fitz Alwine set to work with alacrity. He got all his men ready and, with Sir Guy, he started off to Barnsdale. It was agreed that he should lead his men to one part of the wood, and that Sir Guy, in the disguise of a yeoman, should take another, endeavor to find Robin Hood, slay him if he could, and in the event of success, he was to blow a horn which had a peculiar tone with it, and thereupon the sheriff was to join him and together they were to do the best they could to slay as many of the merrie men as they could and take the others prisoners. With this intention, early one morning they quitted Nottingham.

Two days subsequent to this, Robin Hood, lying down beneath his trysting tree, fell into a slumber. Little John seated himself by his side and was conning over the merits of his pleasant wife, Winifred, when a woodwele, alighting on a bough above him, began singing with extraordinary loudness that he could not but take note of it. Robin also from sleeping disturbedly awoke, and sprung to his feet.

"Why, where am I? – Oh, I have been dreaming," he answered, rubbing his eyes and waking himself up. "I have had a dream. I thought I was treated contemptuously by two yeomen. I threw back their scorn with interest, and we came to blows. They conquered me, beat me and bound me. They were about to slay me when suddenly a bird alighted on a tree near me and seeming like as it had been made of flame, and it appeared to speak, bidding me be of good cheer. My bands at that moment fell from me and I was free. Then I awoke."

"It was odd," said Little John, thoughtfully, "While you were sleeping, a woodwele sat itself on yon bough, and sang so loud it waked you. It fled directly you moved."

"It may mean something," said Robin, scarcely allowing to himself that he was superstitious, and therefore, chary of making the remark. "Warnings should never be despised, however slight. We will look about us and see what is going on."

The merrie men now drew nigh in answer to his summons, and bidding them away towards York, which was the only point from which he

anticipated danger, he took Little John with him to reconnoiter one part of the wood, while Will Scarlet, with two others, went in the direction of Mansfield.

As Robin Hood and Little John proceeded, something in the same direction that Will had taken, they saw a yeoman with a *capul hide* [*horse hide*] about him as a species of cloak – not unfrequently worn by Yorkshire yeomen of that day, especially those who had the charge of horses. He had a sword and dagger by his side, and looked as great a villain as he was in reality.

“Aha!” exclaimed Robin, on seeing him, “Here’s a stranger. He looks a ruffian – I’ll try if he be one. If he is, he hath no business here, and unless he budes pretty quickly, he shall taste the quality of my weapons.”

“He looks a dog who will bite,” said Little John, scanning the stranger from head to foot. “Do you stay, Robin, beneath this tree, and I will go ask him what he doeth here. Marry, I will make him troop quickly.”

“No, Little John,” uttered Robin, hastily, “I have a fancy for this fellow. I have not had a bout a long while, and, by the Holy Mother, I never should, if thou hadst thy will. Thou’rt ever wishing me to send my men before, and I tarry behind. By St. Mary, but some day I shall have to set to and beat thee for mere want of practice, only that it may be breaking a good staff, thine head being of such especial thickness. No, Little John, I will trounce this knave myself, for I am sure he is one – he looks one. And do thou go to Will, and bid him back. He is not far from hence. When thou hearest my horn, I shall want thee, but not before.”

“Your will is my law,” said Little John, turning away somewhat tified, because Robin would not suffer him to fight instead of him. Leaving Robin Hood to accost the stranger in his *capul hide*, we will follow Little John in his path to find Will Scarlet.

He wandered on, annoyed that Robin should have taken into his own hands the task of fighting the stranger, for he easily guessed it would come to that, when he wished so much himself to have the pleasure. But a little reflection taught him that he was unjust in being offended where he had no right to take offense, so the fit passed away almost as quickly away as it had come.

When he came to consider on what errand he was bound, he found he had wandered considerably out of his path. He, however, bestirred himself, and was soon on the track of Will Scarlet. A long time had not elapsed ere he heard the clashing of weapons as of men engaged in violent strife. He ran on in the direction from whence the sound emanated, and soon came upon Will Scarlet and his two companions fighting desperately with eight or ten opponents, and the Sheriff of Nottingham advancing swiftly with a large body of men.

Little John rushed forward with a loud shout, and getting his bow ready, he took an aim at the sheriff in such an ecstasy of passion that the sudden force used in drawing his bow broke it, and the arrow fell useless to the ground.

“A curse on thee and the tree on which thou grew!” he cried, bitterly, “Thou worthless slip of a more worthless tree, to fail me at such a moment as this!”

He darted forward to help his companions. He saw one of them cut down, after opposing three most manfully, without budging a foot. He seized a bow which the unfortunate outlaw had dropped, and took another aim at the sheriff, and exclaimed –

“One shot will I shoot now that shall quiet yonder rascally sheriff who is coming hither so fast. He shall stop as suddenly as he is advancing.”

He drew the bow, and loosed the shaft. The sheriff’s quick eye detected the act, and he threw himself flat upon the horse. A retainer, William-a-Trent, who rode close behind him, received it through his body, and fell dead from his horse. That William-a-Trent had been very anxious to be of the expedition against Robin Hood, but it had been better for him

*To have bene a-bed with sorrowe
Than to be that day in the greenwood slade
To meet with Little John’s arrowe*

The troop pricked forward more quickly on perceiving one of their companions slain, and Little John threw himself among those who were sore pressing Will Scarlet and his remaining comrade. He hurled one fellow to the ground like lighting, tore a spear from his grasp, and laid about him with tremendous energy and effect. Will Scarlet’s companion was cut down — it was impossible to withstand so many opposers, and Will was himself hemmed in. Little John, however, who had seen the second outlaw fall, raged like a lion. He cleared Will in an instant from his assailants, and roared to him to fly.

“Never,” cried Will, “while I have breath!”

“Fly, Will, for the Holy Mother’s sake!” urged Little John; “Seek Robin Hood, and get together the merrie men, or there will be more true hearts this day on their backs than the green turf will be glad to receive.”

Seeing the truth of Little John’s words, Will made a desperate cut at one fellow who blocked his path, and felled him to the earth, and then darted off to find Robin, while Little John gave no ground, and fought like a madman.

But it was madness to contend with such numbers, and although his prodigious strength stood him in good stead, there were too many against

him to make it of much avail. A long staff was thrust between his legs, in endeavoring to avoid it, he was thrown. A body of men threw themselves upon him, and bound him hand and foot. There he lay until the sheriff came up, and one fellow bared his sword to cut off his head on the instant, as he fully expected to receive an immediate command to that effect from Fitz Alwine, but he did not give it. His eye lighted on Little John; with a grim smile he ordered him to be placed on his feet, and said to him with a chuckle –

“I remember you, my forest pole, and you shall remember me before you are sent into the other world.”

“I don’t forget you,” said Little John, gnawing his nether lip, to conceal his rage and shame at being a prisoner. “I hung you like a thieving dog under your own roof – how did you relish your due? Remember you, Robin Hood will be here anon – ask him if he recollects you, and note his reply.”

“You mean his head will be here,” said the sheriff, grinning. “His carcass will be left to rot in the green wood, or else to make a meal for the wolves.”

“It will never do that,” said Little John, “Thou’rt only foretelling thine own doom.”

“You will find thy mistake. I will let thee live until his head is brought to thee. Then shalt thou speed after him with most uncommon quickness.”

“I fear thy threats less than I fear thee, and I fear thee as I fear the miserable worm that trails the ground meeting his death beneath my feet,” returned Little John, with cool contempt.

“You shall – you shall –” The Baron was at a loss for a simile, so he wound up with “You shall see. I will let thee know thy fate. Thou shalt be wounded, but not to death, and be drawn at my horse’s heels up hill and down dale, and then hung on the highest tree in these parts.”

“But thou mayst fail of thy villainous purpose, if it pleaseth the Holy Son of God,” said Little John, quietly; “So I care not for what thou sayest.”

The Baron intended to have made a reply, but so many synonymous sentences rushed to his tongue together, and each strove so hard to get out first, that he found himself bothered. And so, after a little spluttering, he contented himself with saying nothing at all. He waved his hand for Little John to fall back among the troop, and quietly awaited the result of Sir Guy’s undertaking.

We must now return to Robin Hood, who, advancing to the stranger with the capul hide, said to him blithely –

“Good morrow, good fellow. Methinks, by the stout bow you bear in your hand, you should be good archer.”

“I have lost my way,” said the stranger, not heeding Robin’s question. “I know nought of this wood.”

“I do, every turn,” replied Robin. “I will lead thee through it, an’ thou tellest me where thou wouldst go.”

“I seek an outlaw whom men call Robin Hood,” said the stranger. “I had rather meet with him than have the best—”

“What?” asked Robin Hood, observing him hesitate.

“The best forty pounds that ever were coined,” he replied, hastily.

“If you come with me, my mighty yeoman, thou shalt soon see him,” said Robin Hood, “but if thou’rt in no exceeding haste, we will have some little pastime beneath the greenwood trees here. Let us try our skill at woodcraft. We may perhaps light on this Robin Hood at some unlooked for time, for I can tell thee he is not always to be met with when sought for.”

Robin cut down the thin boughs of several shrubs, pared off the leaves, and then struck them upright in the ground at some distance apart.

“Now, yeoman,” he said, “see if thou canst hit with thine arrow, at sixty yards, either of those wands. Lead off, and I will follow thy shot.”

“Nay, good fellow,” replied the stranger, “if you ask me to do that which seemeth impossible, thou hadst better lead off, and if it is to be done, show how you do it.”

Robin shot without appearing to take an aim, and his arrow went within an inch of the slight wand – so close, indeed, that the stranger thought he had hit it. But Robin told him he had not, and made him go on. After several ineffectual essays, he confessed he could not come within a foot of it. Robin then made a small garland of wild flowers and hung it upon one of the wands, bidding the yeoman send his arrow through its center. He took a long aim at it, and the arrow went through the garland, just ruffling the inner edge.

“Well shot!” said Robin, “but not well enough for a yeoman. You see the thin slip of wand which shows itself through the center of the garland – I will cleave it with my arrow.”

“It cannot be done,” said the stranger.

“Behold!” cried Robin, his arrow leaving his bow almost as soon as his words left his lips.

“Wonderfully done!” cried the stranger, decidedly astonished. “Why, good yeoman, an’ thy heart be as stout as thine hand, though art better

than this same Robin Hood they talk so much of. What is thy name, that I may remember who hath so astonished me with his expertness at the bow?"

"Nay, by my faith," said Robin, jovially, "Let me know thine, and I will not withhold mine from thee."

"I have a good estate to the west," replied the stranger, "and am called after it Sir Guy of Gisborne. You may marvel to see me in this unknighly apparel, but I have sworn to take Robin Hood, and I bethought me of this disguise as being the more likely to bring me to his presence. Now, what is thy name, yeoman?"

"I have a good estate here," replied Robin; "I have also one in Nottinghamshire, and one in Huntingdonshire, which is kept from me. I am one who cares for or fears no man, especially such a one as thee. I am he whom thou seekest – my name is Robin Hood."

"Then shalt thou die here!" cried Sir Guy, drawing his sword, "and this horn will convey news of thy defeat to those who are near at hand, and will be glad to hear of it. Say thy prayers, Robin Hood, for come what may, I spare thee not. I have sworn to take back thy head, and I will, by Satan!"

"When thou has conquered me, thou mayst do thy will on my body," said Robin, coolly, "but mark my words, Sir Guy – thou hast sworn not to spare me – I will not spare thee, if the Blessed Virgin gives me the victory. Thou art a Norman – that seals thy doom. Come on – no quarter – life for the victor, death to the vanquished!"

Not a word more passed between them, but they set to work in good earnest. Sir Guy of Gisborne, in addition to great personal strength, was an accomplished swordsman, and with these qualities he possessed a ruthless stony nature, which would induce him to take every advantage to draw blood, no matter how unknighly or unfair the act, or whether the meanness gained him any advantage.

Acting up to this spirit, he attacked Robin fiercely before he had drawn his sword. Robin leaped back to avoid him, and soon had his trusty blade opposed to the knight's but he lost ground by it, and was forced close to the straggling roots of an oak tree. Sir Guy pressed him hard, for he well knew he had much the advantage of ground, and he determined to make the most of it.

His blows rained hard and fast. They were delivered with a force which made Robin each moment expect to see his own blade shiver at the hilt, but it was a stout blade, and bore all the blows nobly. Robin quickly found that if he remained much longer in his present position, he should stand a very certain chance of being slain. He therefore resolved to use his best

efforts to extricate himself, and in his turn attacked Sir Guy. But the knight stood like a rock, and budged not a foot, although Robin kept him well-employed in defending himself.

After some little time, Robin saw that, without some tremendous exertion, he could not gain his point, and as this might tell against him if he used it even successfully. He determined to leap lightly on one side, then edge round, and try if possible to place Sir Guy in the same position he had just quitted. No sooner had he come to the conclusion than he determined to act upon it, and just as Sir Guy was delivering a heavy blow, he leaped aside, but his foot caught in a root of the tree just as he jumped, and he fell to the ground. Sir Guy was not the man to let such an opportunity pass without taking advantage of it, and he accordingly with a shout sprung on his prostrate opponent, with the intention of putting an end to the contest at once. Robin perceived the danger of his situation instantly, and cried earnestly –

“Holy Mother of God! Ah! thou dear Lady! It is no man’s destiny to die before the time allotted him to live in this world. My hour is not yet come, I feel. Give me strength to win this fight, or die as becomes a man and a true Saxon.”

As he uttered these words he felt a sudden vigour pass into his limbs, every sinew seemed strengthened. Dexterously avoiding the fierce blow Sir Guy made at him, he leaped upon his feet and now obtained the advantageous position Sir Guy had previously possessed; He made the most of it, and the clashing of their weapons grew fiercer than ever.

At last Robin, making a powerful parry of a blow delivered by Sir Guy with terrific strength, succeeded in whirling his sword far from his grasp, and of burying his own like lighting in his heart. Sir Guy clenched his hands conversely, and fell dead without a groan.

When Robin saw that he had slain his opponent, he offered up a prayer of thankfulness for his success, and when he had done this, he bethought him of what Sir Guy had said relative to bearing his head to those who were near, and who would be glad to hear the tones of the horn which was to convey the news of his defeat.



“By the Mass!” he cried, “It will be as well to see who these folks are that are so near, and with that capul hide I may disguise myself enough for my purpose.”

“Now, Sir Guy, with your permission we will change clothes, and lose no time either about it, for every moment wasted may be of consequence to those connected with me.”

So saying, he stripped Sir Guy’s body of such habiliments as he deemed necessary, and divesting himself of the corresponding garments on his own person, he clothed himself in the dead man’s dress, and threw the capul hide across his shoulders as he had seen Sir Guy wear it. Then for fear the strangers whom he was about to seek might come and discover the body of their friend while he was looking for them, he dressed Sir Guy in his clothes. He then cut off his head, which he gashed in the face so that it might not be recognized, and bore it with him, in order to make his disguise more complete, as he had heard Sir Guy say he had sworn to carry Robin’s head back, as a trophy of his victory. When he had made all his arrangements, and was about to depart, he looked upon the body of Sir Guy, and exclaimed –

“Lie thou there, Sir Guy – lie thou there! Thou hast nought to complain of. I have done that for thee which thou didst strive with all thy might to do for me, and therefore, be thou not wrathful that I have prevailed. For, beshrew me, if thou hast had the hardest knocks, thou hast the better garments – the best Lincoln cloth ‘stead of thy Yorkshire woollen. Now will I see what the effect of thy little horn will be, for I will blow a lusty blast. I know not if there be any signal agreed upon, but I will stand the chance of that.”

He blew a loud blast, and the horn having a peculiar tone, he concluded there was nothing more needful to distinguish it from any others. It was heard and replied to, and no sooner did the return strike upon his ear than he hastened in the direction whence it proceeded. He was soon close to the Baron and his party, and blew a second blast on Sir Guy’s horn.

“Hark!” cried Fitz Alwine, joyfully, “that betokens good tidings. It is Sir Guy’s horn. He hath slain Robin Hood, the vile outlaw.”

“A hundred Sir Guys could not do it, an’ he fought fairly and like a man!” roared Little, John, feeling a horrible misgiving that the Baron was speaking the truth, especially as he saw Robin coming down the glade, clad in the capul hide, and imitating Sir Guy’s bearing so closely that he had no idea but that it was really the knight, who was approaching.

“Give me a quarter staff and let him take his blade, the best steel ever forged, and I will defeat him, if he hath slain Robin. And if he hath, there are as many hands as he hath hairs in his head who will revenge it. He has used some vile means to gain his ends, which no honest man would stoop to do.”

“Say thou thy prayers, dog!” cried the sheriff. “Thy master is slain, and so shalt thou be. Therefore thou hadst better spend thy remaining moments in prayer than in railing at a noble-hearted knight, who hath slain thy doughty leader as easily as though he were cutting down a reed. Come hither, come hither, thou gallant Sir Guy!”

He continued, addressing Robin Hood, whom he saw advancing quickly to him, “Thou hast delivered thy country from the most monstrous villain the world e’er saw – thou hast slain Robin Hood! Ask what thou wilt of me that I can grant, and it shall be thine.”

Robin Hood, at a glance, had seen Little John’s situation, and smiled as he encountered the fierce glance of defiance and hatred which the latter threw at him, supposing him to be the slayer of his beloved friend and leader. The words of the sheriff alighted on Robin’s ear, carrying with them a means of extricating Little John from his situation, and in reply, therefore, he said to the sheriff –

“I have slain him who would have slain me, and since you give me the power of asking a boon of you, I ask but a blow at yonder knave, whom you have there bound. I have slain one. let me see if I cannot prevail over the other.”

“If you wish to kill him with your own hand,” answered the sheriff, not noticing the change of voice, because he never for an instant supposed, or even thought that he could be deceived in this manner, “you can, if you list, but this is no boon. Ask something else of me.”

“I need no other,” replied Robin.

“Then shalt thou have thy will. His life is thine.”

“I will shrive him first,” said Robin, “then will I loose his bonds, and fight with him.”

Little John although he had not detected our hero in his disguise, immediately he heard his voice, knew him, and was in a moment relived from the most terrible weight of anguish he had ever felt. He gave a long sigh, the effects of the relief he experienced, and waited then patiently and quietly until Robin matured his plan, whatever it might be. He was not long left in uncertainty, for Robin approached him with some haste. But on finding that the sheriff, with several of his followers, were close upon his heels, he stopped suddenly and said abruptly –

“Stand back! Stand back, all of you! Did I not say I was going to hear his shrift before I fought with him? And ye all know it is not the custom, nor right, that more than one should hear another’s shrift. Stand back, I tell you, or I may trounce some of you, even as I have him whose carcass, without this head, lies in yonder glad! There, dogs! Take it and glut your eyes with the trunkless head of him who had a stouter heart

than any hound among ye!" so saying, he threw the gashed head of Sir Guy into the Baron's arms, who as instantly threw it among his men with a roar of terror, as if it had been a ball of red-hot iron.

None of them were more eager than their lord to retain possession of it, and it fell to the ground to be kicked from one to the other. Robin had no occasion to say another word: the men, accompanied by the Baron, fell back to a more respectful distance, quite as much – possibly more – satisfied with his promise to trounce them, than if he had put his promise into execution. He, as soon as he saw them as far as he considered essential for his purpose, approached Little John, and with a forest knife cut loose his bands, placed in his hand the bow and quiver of arrows which he had taken from Sir Guy (he still retained his own), and then blew the call on his own bugle which summoned his merrie men to his side.

He had scarce blown it when a loud shout rung in the air, and Will Scarlet, with a face like his name, came bounding into sight, sword in hand, followed by a body of the merrie men at the top of their speed. The sight of all this came upon the Baron's vision like a horrible dream. But it so quickly assumed the appearance of reality, when Robin threw off the capul hide and declared his name and Little John fitting an arrow to Sir Guy's bow, drew it to the head, only waiting for Robin's order to discharge it, that he 'fettled him to be gone', and without stopping to give a command to his men, he spurred his horse hard, and dashed off at full gallop. The men were not long in following his example.

"May the foul fiend have a speedy grip of him!" cried Little John, gnashing his teeth; "But his cowardice shall not save him. I'll bring him down from here." And he prepared to discharge his arrow.

"Hold thy hand!" exclaimed Robin, staying him. "Do not take his life, he has but a little while to live, according to nature. It is of little use to shorten his time here."

"Robin, I cannot let the old rogue escape scathless," cried Little John, excitedly. "I will give him something to remind him of us for some time to come."

As he concluded he discharged his arrow, and judging from the leap which Fitz Alwine gave from the saddle, and the energetic speed with which he drew the arrow from the place where it had hit him, there is little doubt he would find either sitting or riding essentially disagreeable for some time.

With congratulations upon the narrow escape which he had just had for his life, and at which he laughed almost contemptuously, Little John was led by the merrie men to the haunt in Barnsdale Wood, and the remainder of the day was passed in joyous festivity.

Chapter 8

*Lyth and Lysten, gentil men,
And herken what I shall say:
How the proud Sheryfe of Notyngham,
Dyde cry a full fayre play.
He that shoteth 'alder' best,
Furthest, fayre, and lowe;
At a payre of fynly buttes,
Under the grene wode shawe,
A ryghte good arowe he shall have,
The shaft of sylver white,
The heade and the feders of ryche rede Golde,
In England is none lyke.
But take out thy brown swerde,
And smyte all of my hede;
And gyve me wounds dede and wyde,
No lyfe on me be lefte.
I wold not that, said Robyn,
Johan, that thou wert slawe,
For all the golde in mery England,
Though it lay now on a rawe.*

----- A Lytell Geste of Robin Hode
The Fyfth Fytte

*Forthe he yode to London toune,
All for to tel our kynge.
Toke he there his gentyll knyght,
With men of armes stronge,
And lad hym home to Notyngham warde,
I bonde both fote and honde.
Up then sterte good Robyn,
As a man that had be wode:
Buske yeu. My mery younge men,
For Hym that dyed on a rode.
And he that this sorrowe forsaketh,
By Him that dyed on a tre;
And by Him that all thinges maketh,
No lenger shall dwell with me.*

----- Ibid. The Syxth Fytte

Fitz Alwine looked upon Robin as the bane of his existence – the only bane he ever experienced. It mattered little what crosses he had met with in life, from what source they sprung, or how originated. Robin Hood had thwarted him in his dearest project – the wedding his daughter to an immensely wealthy man – and that act involved all other disappointments or evils he had ever met with.

He possessed an insatiable spirit of revenge, and ever tried to wreak it on the unfortunate wretch who had induced it with relentless animosity. His every effort to exterminate – that is the only word which denotes the feeling he bore – Robin Hood and his band had been unsuccessful, and replete with indignity and insult to himself.

Still, he resolved to persevere, hoping that some day before he died he should have the satisfaction of seeing his hopes gratified. And still every event he created for the accomplishment of them proved as unfortunate to him as its predecessor, and he still found himself in the position of a laughing stock for the townsfolk and the very men he wished to make tremble at his name.

To attempt to gain his point by force he knew was useless. His stratagems, too, had failed. Still, as he had no other means left to apply to than artifice, he determined once more to have recourse to its wiles, and racked his brain to invent some plausible affair which would draw Robin Hood within it, and he be able so to place his people as to capture him and kill him at once, without waiting for shrift or aught which could delay his death one second. He struck upon one, which, after arranging it well in his own mind, scheming, planning, devising, and considering means and ways to strengthen every point which was or might be weak, and have the slightest influence to overthrow his plan, he perfected in imagination, and proceeded to put it into action.

He summoned one of the wealthiest people in the town, and, after swearing him to secrecy, he unfolded his plan to him. The man, who was a merchant, and of a miserly turn, was easily brought into his views.

And, according to what they had previously agreed on, the merchant summoned a number of the townspeople, and proposed they should go in a body to the high sheriff, and beg him, for the honor of Nottingham, that he do call a full fair play of archery between the men of Nottingham and York-shire. That for the sake of both sides it should take place on the borders of the two counties, and the prize to be an arrow, the shaft of which should be silver, the head and feathers of gold.

The proposition was met with the highest enthusiasm by the townspeople, and they went in such a body to the castle to beg the permission, that Fitz Alwine almost danced with joy in anticipation of the entire accomplishment of his scheme, the first part of it having so well succeeded.

He dissembled his joy, however, and gave his assent with an air of indifference, and said at the same time, as the consent appeared to give them so much pleasure, he had no objection to preside upon the occasion, if it would be of any consequence or service to the affair.

The deputation of townspeople, one and all present, requested his presence with one voice, and appeared as delighted as if they loved him with all their hearts, and as though there was something goodly in his presence, which would shed gladness on the circle over which he was to preside. They went forth and published his condescension with outstretched hands, open eyes, and mouths more open still.

The match was proclaimed open to all comers of each county, the day was appointed, and the spot named, between Barnsdale Wood and Mansfield. As means were taken to spread it in the two countries, it soon reached Robin Hood, and he resolved to make one among the competitors, for the honour of the spot where he was brought up – where all his early and happy days were passed.

When however, he heard the Sheriff of Nottingham was to preside at the trial, he suspected something of foul play towards himself. He fancied it might be a lure to entrap him, under the pretence of safety and protection to all comers. To be on the safe side, as well as turn the tables on those who devised ill for him, he determined to do his best to counteract their schemes

Accordingly, upon the day previous to the one the match was to take place upon, he assembled his men, and told them he would go and shoot for the honour of Nottingham county, and that with him, as he doubted the faith of the sheriff, should go seven score of the merrie men.

Six of them should shoot with him, they were to be variously attired, and the remainder were to so dispose themselves that, in case of foul play, they could unite in a body at a moment's notice. They were to have their bows ready bent, their sheafs full of arrows, and be in all ways prepared for desperate action.

His orders were obeyed to the letter, and the time for their departure having arrived, they set forth. On coming near the place where the people were assembled, they separated, and mixed apparently indiscriminately with the crowd. Robin Hood, Little John, Will Scarlet, Much, Gilbert of the White Hand, Reynold Greenleaf, and George-a-Green, being the seven of the merrie men who were to shoot, kept together. They were all dressed differently and scarce spoke to each other to avoid all chance of being recognized, for being in so large an assembly of people, the greater proportion being Derbyshire and Yorkshiremen, his probabilities of escape, should he be set upon, were few, unless by a determined and vigorous resistance, or the employment of the best stratagems.

The spot selected for this play of archery was an extensive glade on the borders of Barnsdale Wood, contiguous to the highway, a long flat of considerable dimensions. Hundreds of people of the neighbouring counties had assembled to witness the sport.

They were arranged in a circle, and nearly in the center was placed the butts at which the archers were to direct their arrows. By the side was a small building erected, in which the sheriff was to sit, judge the shots and award the prize. He was attended by a numerous body of men-at-arms, and had enrolled a quantity of townspeople to serve in the capacity of peace officers, who were upon any disturbance to unite, seize the brawler and drag him before the sheriff.

A great number of men-at-arms in yeomen's dresses were distributed among the crowd, with orders to like effect; and by these means, Baron Fitz Alwine hoped, if Robin Hood made his appearance – which on such an occasion he had little doubt he would – he would be enabled to get him in his power, and wreak in the most summary manner upon him the vengeance which had been so long denied him.

The sport commenced. Three Nottingham men shot at the targets, and all hit the mark, but none in the centre. Three north country yeomen next fired with equal success, making a tie. Then Will Scarlet shot, and put his shaft in the centre of the mark with the greatest ease.

There was a great shout, the arrow was withdrawn, and Little John followed. The point of his arrow occupied the same hole which Will's had previously made; and ere the butt-keeper could remove his shaft, Robin Hood fired, and shivered Little John's arrow to pieces, his own shaft taking its place. There was a great uproar among the people, the Nottingham men offering wagers freely.

Three Yorkshire men, the best archers of their county, next advanced, and taking steady aims, each hit the centre of the bull's eye. The north country men were now uproarious in their turns, and took the wagers as fast as the Nottingham men would lay them. The sheriff kept a sharp look out, but not being quite so long-sighted as he had been years ago, he could not, at a hundred and fifty yards – the distance at which the archers stood from the butts – distinguish the features of any one sufficiently to recognise whether his enemy was among the competitors.

Much, Gilbert of the White Hand, Reynold Greenleaf and George-a-Green took their turn next, each hitting the centre with the nicest precision. Four northern men succeeded them, and tied them. It was now found that many of these men were so practised at the butts that they could hit the centre of the bull's eye without fail. Wands were therefore erected and seven of a side were chosen.

The Nottingham people declared at once for those who had already been successful for them, Robin Hood and his men; and the Yorkshire men agreed to put the honour of their county in the hands of those yeomen who had ventured so well for them. The Yorkshire men had the lead off, and their first archer slit the wand, the second grased it, the next missed it, but went so close to it that it was not thought possible by the Yorkshire men or even Nottingham men they could be beaten.

However, the opinion was speedily changed, when Will Scarlet advanced, and taking up his bow carelessly, shot his arrow underhand and clove the willow wand all to splinters.

“Hurrah for Nottinghamshire!” cried the Nottingham men, flinging their caps without the slightest reflection as to whether they should ever recover them again.

Fresh wands were erected, and each of Robin’s men, from Little John to George-a-Green, clove the wand with the greatest of ease. It came to Robin’s turn and he discharged three arrows at the wand with such rapidity, that but for seeing the three transfix it, and none else but him firing, they would not have credited it.

Thereupon it was declared that the Nottingham men were the better archers, but as only one man could claim the arrow, Robin Hood and the north country archer, who at his first shot had slit the wand, were chosen to shoot for it.

Several descriptions of trials of skill were determined on and essayed, but in all, Robin Hood was the victor, although the north country man proved himself an archer of no mean kind. Many there said Robin Hood could not have shot better than did Robin Hood himself – for they knew him not, and distinguished him by the appellation of Red Jacket. But the name got bruited about, and the exclamation, as exclamations too frequently are, got perverted, and at last it was said to be Robin Hood himself. Upon which the Yorkshire men cried it was not a fair trial of skill, he being a too practiced hand, and not liking to lose the honour or their money – much the preponderating consideration – they tried to bring it to a wrangle.

The merrie men no sooner found what was going on, than, by a preconcerted signal, they united together in small but compact body of ninety men, and got ready for hard fighting. All this while Robin Hood was led up to the sheriff amid the acclamations of the Nottingham men, to receive the prize which the Baron Fitz Alwine was to present.

As Robin kept his head down in the attitude of humility, the Baron could not exactly tell whether it was him or not, albeit there was a great similarity in the figure. He was in a state of incertitude, and therefore, with some complimentary words, he placed the arrow in Robin’s hands, keeping the sharpest of sharp glances upon him, to detect if it was or was not the celebrated outlaw.

No sooner had our hero received it, than he transferred it to his belt, and looked full in the sheriff’s face, saying laughingly – “I esteem the gift more than I have words to express, more particularly as it is presented to me by so kind a friend as yourself. I am now returning to my home, among the green leaves and flowers, and shall preserve this prize as a

memento of having kept for Nottinghamshire the honour of being the best archers, and a testimony of your noble want of prejudice or personal feeling. I bid you good den, Master Sheriff."

"Stop! Stay!" roared the sheriff, "Soldiers, do your duty. This is Robin Hood, seize him!"

"Dastardly wretch!" shouted Robin, "You declared this a full fair-play, open and safe to all comers"

"But not to you," cried the sheriff. "Seize him!"

"The first man had need to mutter his prayers ere he advances," cried Robin, in a stentorian voice, bending his bow, and aiming at a fellow who came running to seize him, but who, instantly he saw the extended bow, recoiled, stopped, and then ran back. Robin blew his horn on the instant, and retreated upon his men, who were advancing hastily to support him, led on by Little John and Will Scarlet. They soon joined, and Robin ordered them to bend their bows, and retreat in close order – for the numbers were by far too great to attempt to oppose with anything like success, or without a terrible effusion of blood. The Baron roared to his men to follow them up, and the north country men, annoyed at being defeated and their losses, prepared to assist them, but the Nottingham men being winners, cheered Robin and his men heartily, prevented the Yorkshire men and the men-at-arms in private clothes, from staying their progress.

They opened a lane for them to pass through, and then closed it up, as Robin, the last to retreat, retired. They could not long stem the torrent although the Nottingham men took up the quarrel earnestly, and in the height of their rage, pelted and bestowed every epithet of contumely upon the man they had been so delighted to have preside over them.

Soon were the soldiery and crowds of Yorkshire men in full pursuit of them, but they were kept in check by the admirable manner in which Robin conducted the retreat. Every now and then his men discharged a flight of arrows, which told with terrible effect upon the pursuers, staying their progress, and frequently throwing them into confusion. They returned the shots, but with very little effect. At length, after they had been retreating some hours, with four or five times their number in pursuit, they halted a short time to recruit, and their pursuers gained rapidly on them.

They waited until they came well within arrow shot, and then they shot so hard and fast that the comers were glad also to halt, and seek the protection of such trees as would cover them from the heavy fire they were receiving, and enable them with more security to return the fire. But when they had ensconced themselves, and commenced shooting with more system than they had hitherto done, the merrie men were in full retreat again.

Little John, who was by Robin Hood's side after they had been upon the retreat some time, turned suddenly to him and said — "Dear friend, my time has come, I am deeply wounded, and can go no further."

"What!" cried Robin, looking at him as if he had been stunned.

"It is as I say," returned Little John. "I am wounded in the knee, I have lost so much blood my limbs refuse to bear me," and he fell heavily on the ground.

"No, no it is not so," returned Robin kneeling by his side and raising him up. "Lean on me, come, fear not, I am not tired, I can well bear your weight. Let me bind up your wound for you."

"Nay, it is of no use, Robin," said Little John, his voice growing feeble, "The strength is out of the limb, and I can walk no further. I know too well the danger of delay, and so do you and the merrie men. Go on and leave me here"

"Never!" exclaimed Robin, energetically.

"Never think upon it, but do it," urged Little John, "You have too many lives under your protection to think of me. Leave me here, but if you ever loved me as a friend, as a brother who loved you dearly, or as a servant who has served you truly and faithfully, without thought of himself, if it be only for the meed of my service to you, let not the villainous sheriff and his hounds find me alive, but do thou draw thy good blade, and smite off my head, that I may die as befits a good and true Saxon, and I will, as I have ever done, bless thee for the good deed. Let not a breath of life remain in me, to give them pleasure or me the pain of knowing they can insult my last moments. Do this for me, Robin, if you ever loved me."

"I would not that you wert slain, John," burst forth Robin, dashing a tear from his eye, "for all the gold in merry England, though it were at my side, in a heap. I would not that thou wert dead, for the sake of the lives of half the band, true and gallant hearts though they be."

"No! sooner than thou should be left here to die alone, I will bestride thy body, and fight to the last drop of blood left in my veins. And when I fall, it shall be by thy side, and we will to the next world together, hand in hand, heart to heart, as we have done in this,"

"We will all fight, or die by his side," shouted Will Scarlet. "Here's Little John wounded nearly to death," he cried loudly to the merrie men, "Who is there among ye will leave him to be captured by the crew who are after us?"

"None, none!" shouted the men with one accord. "Let us all form round him and die by his side."

"There's no need for any of you to die yet, nor Little John either," exclaimed Much; "He is wounded only in the leg, and faint from loss of blood. I'll put him on my back and carry him till I drop."

"Then I will take him, and do the like," said Will Scarlet; "Cheer up, Little John, we will never leave you."

With a little opposition from Little John, Much lifted him upon his shoulder, and the retreat was again commenced, for Robin had commanded a halt as soon as he had learned his faithful follower's condition.

Their delay had given their pursuers an opportunity of gaining upon them, and they pressed them very sore. The merrie men, by Robin's command, returned no fire but when it could be effective, for they had yet a long distance to proceed, and it was necessary to husband their arrows. They kept on their way with good hearts, and despaired not of yet reaching their haunt, and when there, they did not fear sending their pursuers back in the shape of fugitives.

They kept on, and several times did Much lay down Little John in order to shoot, when a strong and long shot was wanted, and then took him up again, and bore him on his shoulders as cheerfully as if he had only his own quarter staff there. Occasionally he was relieved by Arthur-a-Bland, and Gasper-a-Tin. At length, as they got away from the highway, they saw at a short distance a castle, embowered in trees, and surrounded by a wide moat, and the whole situated in a spacious lee.

"Ha!" cried Robin, "Whose can yon castle be? Beshrew me, an' it be one who may not be well disposed towards us, it will go hard against us. Doth anyone here know to whom yon castle belongeth?"

"That do I," returned Reynold Greenleaf, "It belongeth to Sir Richard Gower. This is the Lee Castle, and he is called Sir Richard of the Lee."

"The Holy Virgin be praised!" exclaimed Robin Hood, fervently, "She never deserts me in my hour of need. Will Scarlet, haste you and summon the warden of yon castle, bid him with speed let Sir Richard of the Lee know that Robin Hood and a party of his men are without craving admittance, being hard pressed by foes. We shall see whether the knight has forgotten an obligation."

"My life on his faith!" cried Will, bounding off like a deer to obey the order.

Robin kept his men well together, and though he made for the castle, yet he did it in such a manner as would enable him in case of treachery, to alter his route and keep on to the wood. But he soon had the satisfaction of seeing a white flag hoisted on the castle walls, and a horseman leave the castle at the top of his speed, followed by one whom

he knew to be Will, on foot. It was but a short time ere the horseman was up with Robin, had flung himself from his horse, and grasped his hand with the most vigorous enthusiasm. He was a tall, noble-formed youth, and he cast his eye over the merrie men with a proud look, as though he would give the world to be the leader of such a gallant little band.

"I am Herbert Gower, the son of Sir Richard. Through me he bids you a hearty, honest, unconditional welcome," he cried, his voice becoming rich toned in his earnestness; "and he bade me say, that he is only too glad to be able, in some manner, however slight, to repay the great obligations we are all under to you, and that, be ye in what strait you may be, I and our people will fight to the last gasp for you."

"Most heartily do I thank him," returned Robin; "Never did a friend stand me in better need than he does now. Push on, my merrie men, for the castle. I see the caps of the sheriff's men through the trees, and we may as well spare blood as shed it."

The men did as they were ordered, and pushed briskly on for the castle, while Robin Hood went to Little John to see how he bore up against his loss of blood. As they were retreating through the wood, they cut down some branches and made a litter of green boughs, upon which he was gently laid.

Passing a brook, Robin stripped off part of his under clothing, a woollen cloth of the finest texture then made, tore it in strips, bathed his wound, and then gathered a few herbs, bruised them as he went along, and laying them on the wound, bound it up. Although the agony must have been intense of cutting out the barbed head of the arrow with which he was shot, and which had buried itself in the flesh just above the knee — the shaft having broken short off at the head in his efforts to extricate it — yet he neither groaned or writhed, but smiled, for fear Robin should think he was hurting him, and so be pained himself. When Robin reached his side, as they approached the castle, he inquired—

"How fares it with you, Little John? Are you better?"

"I have never had cause to feel so well, Robin, since I was born," he replied, "Never until today did I know the place I held in all your hearts. I thought, it is true, you would all do me a friendly service an' I needed one, or have a kind thought of me when I was laid beneath the turf, but I could never have believed it would have carried you to the extent of kindness you have shown since the stray arrow caught me. It has made me very happy, I do assure you, and I am not sorry that the mere scratch of a flesh wound should have proved the true hearts, and that they should have turned out so bravely — so nobly. It has made me very happy, indeed it has. I wish my heart could speak for me — it would tell you so much better what I mean than my tongue. But as it can't do that, why I must be content with telling you after the only fashion nature allows us."

“And do you think, Little John, after what you have done for and as one of the band, they could esteem you so lightly as not to do more than they have done already?” said Robin Hood. “You would have been the first to do as much – nay, more than what has been done – therefore, think not so much of what others, having the same feelings in common with yourself, would do for you. I am glad to see you are better.”

“I am better, and shall soon be well,” was the reply, as Robin pressed his feverish hand, and, with a faint smile, he fell nearly fainting from weakness upon the litter.

The moat and drawbridge were soon gained the men passed safely over, and the bridge was drawn up again. While the sheriff and his men, as they came into sight, observing the castle and Robin’s men in full retreat on it, had pushed forward in the hopes of having the fugitives safely in their power, the sheriff was rather startled at seeing the men marching into the castle in such order.

But he was determined to advance to the castle gates, and in the king’s name demand of the owner of the castle to deliver up the merrie men and their leader to his tender mercy. This resolve he put into exertion, and with about three hundred and sixty men he halted beneath the castle walls, challenged it, and demanded of Sir Richard to give up those whom the knight considered his guests.

But he was scornfully refused, and bade to quit the knight’s grounds within half-an-hour, or he would rue it. Just about this time, one of the sheriff’s men, who had been as he was marching boasting of the accuracy of his aim, seeing the head and shoulder of a sentinel on the ramparts, unhesitatingly declared he could send an arrow though it, and as unhesitatingly discharged an arrow for the purpose. But he failed his aim, and it just whistled by the ear of the astonished solder so closely, that at the moment he fancied he was shot, and clapped up his hand to feel, but luckily discovered it to be an agreeable mistake.

The arrow was returned with a volley, so thickly and so well directed, that the sheriff’s men found their situation vastly unpleasant. It took them but little time to discover this remarkable fact, but quick as they were, Fitz Alwine was the first to ascertain it; and as he preferred consulting his inclination rather than his duty, his prudence rather than a courage which he esteemed little better than foolhardiness, he resolved to change it. Ere he departed, he thought he would give Sir Richard one more chance of being loyal, and so called another parley, requesting the knight’s presence on the walls; which on a solemn promise of a faithful truce, was granted him. As soon as Sir Richard appeared, Baron Fitz Alwine cried out–

“Dost thou know thou’rt acting as a traitorous knight, keeping here an outlaw, an enemy to the king, and that thou’rt doing this against all law and right?”

“I know that this castle and these lands are mine,” returned Sir Richard of the Lee, “That they are my kingdom, and that I shall keep here whomsoever I please, and remove any one I please. I have done nothing but what I would do at any and all times, and so, sir, you have your answer. Speed away with thee, and those with thee; say ye what you please to the king, and hear what he shall say to comfort ye. I bid ye hence, and I warn ye that unless ye are gone quickly, your doublets shall be trimmed well with stout shafts. I have no more to say, ye have your answer.” and he disappeared from the walls as he closed his speech.

Fitz Alwine believed there was a chance of his keeping his word, and therefore, took his advice. He called his men together and led them, tired and disappointed, from the spot.

“Welcome to my castle, Robin Hood,” exclaimed the knight, as the sheriff’s men departed, “Welcome to the home your great kindness beneath your trysting tree in the green wood kept for me. Welcome truly art thou to me, Robin, for now shalt thou see what was the comfort I should have lost but for thee, and you may then appreciate how highly I ought, and do, esteem thy act.”

“Thou dost overrate a very simple service,” returned Robin, “And if you must needs reward me for what I had the will and ability to do, do not speak of it. Ere I do anything, I have a follower of mine who is wounded, and I would see him well bestowed.”

“He shall be treated as if he were thyself,” said the knight.

“It is Little John – the truest, noblest, most faithful friend I have,” uttered Robin, with enthusiasm. “I would not that he should die for any consideration on earth. And while I can in any way alleviate his pain by care and attention, I will do so right earnestly and heartily.”

“And for him will I do all that can be done, for I esteem him highly,” replied Sir Richard. “We will to him at once, and see that he is well cared for.”

“If you speak of Little John, as you call him – but I should call him the largest John I ever saw,” cried Herbert, entering, followed by Will Scarlet, “We have seen him well attended to. There is a skillful leech from York, on his way to Derby, and he stopped here this morning for hospitality. He is now dressing the wound, and says, it will be well.”

“I am glad to hear thee say so,” said Robin; “and hearing this, shall be happy to attend thee where thou pleasest, Sir Richard.”

"It shall be to meet my wife and daughter Lilas," he returned; "They are anxious to receive thee, and are now waiting in an adjoining chamber."

"Ah!" exclaimed Herbert, pointing to Will. "I told my friend here that I had the most beautiful creature in the world for my wife, and he tells me that he has one that nothing ever excelled. He shall see mine, and then see what he will say"

"He should see Maude," cried Will, "He would then say something, would he not, Robin?"

"I have no doubt he would," replied Robin, laughing.

"So will you when you see Lilas," said Herbert, speaking as earnestly as if his whole heart was in his words.

And so he did. He made an exclamation of wonder, as did Robin, when they saw a very young timid girl, tall and slender, and as graceful as a fawn, with a face faultlessly beautiful, large, full, blue eyes, fringed with very long eyelashes, and indeed as choice as human nature could possess, led to them by Herbert, and he said in a low voice, looking upon her with passionate ardor –

"This is my wife."

And she met them with such a sweet grace, it made them deem her more beautiful, and she thanked Robin in such terms and in such a voice for what he had done, that he really began to fancy he had done some out-of-the-way goodness. But he felt quite rewarded for it, however, great it might have been, in being of service to such a being, or being thanked by her. The knight's lady met him with her thanks so pleasantly, and with such an unostentatious air of sincerity, that he felt no embarrassment at their being thus reiterated.

"Understand, Robin Hood," said the knight, when each of the females had concluded, "There is no man on earth I love more, or perhaps so much, as I do thee, and I tell thee this in order that you may know and feel your welcome here is as earnest and sincere as you can desire, therefore, hesitate not to do quite as you list. Here you are safe, while one stone stands upon another, from all the proud sheriffs of the kingdom, were they all assembled beneath these walls. I have ordered the gates to be shut, the drawbridge to be kept up and no one suffered to come in without my special order. All my people are under arms and at the walls, ready for any attempts the sheriff may make. As for yourself and merry men, you remain twelve days with me I swear by St. Quintin. After that time, you may stay as long as you list, with as sincere a welcome as now."

Robin thanked him, and consented to stay upon certain conditions, which were that upon its being ascertained that the sheriff had readily departed with his men from the vicinity, the merrie men should return to the haunt and that Will Scarlet should go with them, and return with Marian, Maude, and Winifred.

These propositions were gladly acceded to, and were fulfilled, and a pleasant fortnight did they spend together. At the expiration of that time, with reiterations of mutual good wishes, they separated, and again Robin Hood was with his merrie men in the heart of the green wood.

Fitz Alwine took the advice which Sir Richard of the Lee gave him, and went up to London to have an interview with the king, expecting measures to be taken to punish Sir Richard for harbouring an outlaw, when commanded in the King's name to deliver him up.

"He vows, your majesty, he will keep him, his men, or any one he pleases, in defiance of you," said he to the king, when admitted into his presence, "and that he will be lord of all the land in the north, and set you at naught."

"He shall learn differently," cried the king, incensed; "We will be at Nottingham within this fortnight. Take such men as you may deem necessary from London, enter such good archers as your county or any other may boast into our service, at our expense. If, however, we should not be able to visit your city, do the best you can without us, and make prisoner, of him or of this Robin Hood, and let us know of your success on the instant, and we will devise what shall be then done."

Fitz Alwine promised most faithfully that he would, and most faithfully he resolved to do it, if it were possible. Gathering together as strong a body as he could muster, he marched to the castle in the Lee, and when there, he ascertained that Robin Hood had gone to the wood again with all his people. The sheriff did not like the idea at all of following him there, and attempting to capture him, so he thought, for once he would "shoot at a pigeon and kill a crow," and take Sir Richard prisoner.

The castle was too strong to carry by assault, and therefore, he resolved to lie in wait for him, and take him by stratagem. He had not to wait long, for the knight on the following day went out with his son and a few attendants. However, they were surrounded, and although they made a vigorous resistance, were captured, bound, and carried off to Nottingham.

One of Sir Richard's attendants escaped, and flew to inform his mistress of the sad event. She was horror stricken at the intelligence, and grew distracted, not knowing how to help her husband, or in what way to act for the best. Lilas, however, bethought her of Robin Hood, and counseled an application to him immediately, and the Lady Gower determined to adopt it.

Mounted on a palfrey, and accompanied by Lilas, who would go, and a couple of trusty attendants, she set off for Barnsdale Wood. It fortunately happened that Little John, who had nearly recovered his wound, having promised a fawn to a little girl, the daughter of one of the servants, who had attended him while he lay ill at Sir Guy's, had sent it by one of the merrie men that morning. He therefore served as a guide, and they rode at the top of their speed until they reached the trysting tree. They had the good fortune to meet with Robin there, and no sooner did the Lady Gower behold him than she burst into tears.

"God save thee, Robin Hood," she cried, "God save thee and thy company! I have come to thee as a suiter. For the love of our Dear Lady, whom you so much reverence, grant me a boon."

Robin Hood, viewing her with astonishment. "Tell me, madam, how can I serve you?"

"Oh, Robin Hood," sobbed the lady, bitterly, "My husband, Sir Richard, has been bound, taken prisoner, and carried with my son towards Nottingham – and all for love of thee."

"Ha!" ejaculated Robin Hood with energy. "When was this? By whom?"

"By that same sheriff who pursued you to our home," returned the lady. "Oh, Robin, by the roof that sheltered you in your hour of need, let not my dear husband and beloved child be shamefully slain by this proud, heartless man. They cannot be far from hence, for I fled here instantly I knew of their capture, and they had not been taken but a few minutes ere I knew of my sad loss."

"Fear not, lady," cried Robin; "Have no care for this mishap, gentle lady. If thy husband is living when I reach him, he shall be restored to thee and the sheriff dare not take his life being a knight, without a trial. Therefore, dry up thy tears, I will soon be on their track, and thy lord and child shall again be in thy arms."

"Heaven speed thee!" uttered the weeping lady, clasping her hands in a supplicating manner towards the sky.

"And take my sincere thanks, blessings, and prayers with thee," exclaimed Lilas, smiling on him through her fast flowing tears. "Thou who hast ever been the comfort, the stay, and friend of the wretched, thy reward shall surely come when thou hast need of past deeds only for friends."

"The noble Herbert shall thank me when once again he is in thy arms." replied Robin. "But keep thy kind words until that is accomplished. Let this console thee – if it is in my power, and in that of the gallant hearts who are ready to second every effect of mine with their lives, he shall again be with thee."

"I know thou wilt try thy utmost," exclaimed Lilas, "and I am sure thy success will be equal to thy goodwill."

"Let us hope it may," was Robin's rejoinder. He had summoned such of the merrie men as were absent, and they now pressed round to know upon what service they were required. Robin quickly informed them. "My merrie men," said he "the High Sheriff of Nottingham, who kept you in a long and hot chase a short time since, hath captured the gentle knight Sir Richard of the Lee, and his gallant son Herbert. They are on their way to Nottingham, but we must pursue them, rescue our friends, and teach these disciplined troopers how to conduct a pursuit. We will follow them with all our speed through mire, moss, and fen, glades and coverts, until we overtake them. Remember, we must not return without those we go to seek; and he who is a laggard in this matter finds some other place to pass his life in – he shall no longer dwell in the green wood with me."

The men gave a great shout and declared themselves ready for instant departure and as there was no time to lose, Robin cheered the knight's lady and Lilas with favorable hopes, sent them on their way to the castle in the Lee. Putting himself at the head of his men, accompanied by Little John, Will Scarlet, and Much, started off in full pursuit of the sheriff and his band.

Two of the men were placed on horseback and sent on in advance, by different routes, in case the sheriff might have taken a different way to that which Robin fancied he had, while the body of merrie men kept on a straight path at the top of their speed, surmounting all obstacles with the most determined perseverance.

After a long and fatiguing march, Mansfield was reached, and there Robin learned the troop had recruited themselves and proceeded on to Nottingham. His men were too tired to keep on without some little rest, so he ordered them to stay there, while he, attended by Will Scarlet on horseback, rode on at full speed through Sherwood to the haunt. When he reached it, he blew his bugle. It was answered quickly by a hundred men in person, who crowded delightedly round him. In a few words, he explained in what way he needed their services, and they were ready to do his bidding, heart and hand, as soon as his wishes to that effect left his lips.

He had left Little John in command of the men whom he had brought with him from Barnsdale, with orders that, as soon as they were ready to move, they should take the highway to Nottingham, keeping in the track of the sheriff, whom Robin hoped to intercept before he reached there, and if Little John came up in time, thus to place him between two fires. When everything was arranged, and whatever was done was done quickly, the merrie men, under the command of Robin and Will, quitted the haunt, and made for the highway, at a point not a very long distance from Nottingham.

They reached it in a short time, and had the satisfaction of ascertaining from a wayfarer that no troop had as yet passed there on the way to the town. Robin chose the most advantageous position the situation would afford, and gave his orders very distinctly and decidedly, for he had not a chance to throw away, having to sustain an unequal fight, the force of the sheriff surpassing his three times in number, until Little John brought his men into action.

Robin ambushed a part of his men, and placed the remainder at a narrow part of the road nearer Nottingham. When they were disposed as well as circumstances would allow, he waited coolly the approach of the would-be redoubtable sheriff. The arrival of half-a-dozen troopers in advance notified the approach of him and his cavalcade, and a warm reception was prepared for them. The scouts had advanced considerably beyond the ambush ere a shaft was discharged, but when a solitary note of a horn rose on the air, the troop was saluted with a shower of arrows that took a terrific effect. They made an instant halt, and a division of men was sent on each side to clear the thickets while the main body pushed on. The advance guard were easily captured, and the two divisions fighting at random against an unseen enemy, were also, after being galled by a fire of arrows which could not be surpassed for the dreadful precision of their aim. To save their lives, they were compelled to throw down their weapons, and surrender themselves prisoners. They were led away into the wood, where they were strongly bound and placed where they could not easily escape. The merrie men who had accomplished this feat hastening on their way to join their companions, who were engaged in desperate conflict with the main body of Fitz Alwine's men. The fight was maintained with desperate vigor on both sides, Robin and his men fighting for the honor of liberating the gentle knight and his son, as well as for the gratification, for their countrys sake, of being opposed hand and sword to Normans, whom they viewed as the usurpers and oppressors of the land. Who not only crushed and exercised the most tyrannous and despotic sway over the Saxons as a body, but were the principal cause of the merrie men being tenants of the wood, instead of enjoying the comforts of a home situated within reach of the advantages of a village or a town.

The Normans, on their side, fought desperately, because they hoped to retrieve the honor they had so decidedly and continuously lost, when opposed to Robin Hood. And that feeling was accelerated by the fact of their foes being Saxons, a race whom they hated with as much fervency as the Saxons detested them. The skill, the coolness, and the unerring correctness of their aim rendered the merrie men, though vastly unequal in numbers, almost an equal match for the troops, and whatever deficiency might have existed against them, was counter-balanced by the decided advantage of their position.

The Normans were not slow to discover this, and made tremendous efforts to dislodge them, but were each time repulsed with a frightful sacrifice of human life. After the battle had raged for some time, without the Normans having gained the slightest advantage, which their superiority of numbers ought to have obtained for them, great shouts were suddenly heard in their rear, which proved to be Little John advancing with his band of merrie men.

So soon as they came up and commenced fighting, with enthusiastic earnestness, it acted like an electric shock upon the Normans, who, attacked in front and rear by numbers, of which the excitement prevented them forming a calculation, conceived a great disposition to resign the contest – especially when a great cry arose that the high sheriff, the Lord Baron Fitz Alwine, was slain.

This soon proved to be a fact, for a party of men, led by Robin Hood, had cut their way to the spot where Sir Richard of the Lee and his son were stationed, and they succeeded in reaching it, and Robin with his sword cut asunder their bands and placed weapons in their hands. He found two energetic allies in them, especially in Herbert, who, with all the hot-headedness of youth, fought with an importunity nothing could withstand. Followed by a party of Sherwood men, who cheered him on, admiring proudly his gallant daring, he fought his way to the sheriff; but one of the merrie men, anxious to have the honor of deciding the contest, shot the Baron through the neck with an arrow, then sprung upon him, hurled him from his horse, severed his head from his body, and elevated it at the point of his sword. He mounted the deed man's steed, and holding the head high in the air, he cried with a stentorian voice—

“Normans! Dogs! Behold your leader!

Look upon your proud high sheriff! Down with you, curs! Beg your lives, or ye shall all meet his —”

The words died on his lips, for an arrow from the bow of a Norman pierced him through the brain, and with the ghastly head of the dead sheriff, he fell a corpse from the steed. However, the loss of their leader made the Normans cry quarter, and throw down their arms. The battle was thus won, and Robin moved here and there with the utmost speed to stop the fight in every place where it still lingered. The defeated men, being deprived of all their arms, were, under the escort of a hundred men, led on to Nottingham, bearing the body of their sheriff with them, while the rest gathered up the arms of their conquered enemy and bore them to the haunt. As the body of the sheriff passed Robin, he approached and exclaimed, almost in a soliloquy —

"Farewell forever, thou man of an iron heart and a bloody mind. Thou hast at length met the doom I prophesied thee but a short time since. Evil didst thou ever while thou wert living; thy hand was against every man's and no heart warmed kindly towards thee. In thy word, thy honor, the simplest act of trust, no confidence could be placed. Farewell! Hated and execrated while living, thy memory loathed and despised when dead, thou goest to meet the reward of thy past deeds. And although thou didst never spare one when in thy power, may thy soul be mercifully dealt with by Him who extends His charity to all men, howe'er sinful and erring they may be."

And with a look which partook more of scorn than pity, he turned away and addressed Sir Richard of the Lee –

"This is a sad day's work, Sir Richard," he claimed, "Although we be the conquerors, and have succeeded in liberating thee, albeit we have done this and thy life is saved, yet thy estates will be confiscated as surely as thou standest where thou dost. I would we had never met."

"Why?" asked Sir Richard, with astonishment.

"Inasmuch," replied Robin, "that without my aid you might have gained your estates and had you, you would have still retained them. But through harboring me, a deed of gratitude done for a trifling obligation, thy liberty and life were first endangered, and now, though from that evil thou art rescued, thy estates will be taken from thee, and thou exiled perhaps forever; and this through being connected, though slightly, with me."

"Had I lost everthing in the world, save my gentle wife and my beloved children," returned the knight, with enthusiasm, "through what I had done in return for thy great kindness to me, at a moment when I so much needed it, I could have smiled, nay, rejoiced, that I could show thee how dearly I esteemed what thou hadst done, nor thought the loss sufficient to express my inmost feelings. But I still retain my estates, I am restored to life and liberty, saved at the peril of thine own life, and at the loss of many gallant hearts, whose lives were each worth twenty such carrion as these Normans, who lay strewed round us. I have still my wife and children to cheer me with their pleasant words and happy faces, and if it should so occur that I walk from my home a naked man, having only my family with me, I shall still fervently bless the hour I knew and found a friend in Robin Hood."

"It is pleasant to hear thee say so," replied Robin, "and I will strive to think thou dost mean what thou sayest."

"I will pledge my life, heart and hand, for its truth!" interrupted Herbert, with startling energy. "And in speaking those words my father does but convey what Lilas and my dear mother feel, and I as earnestly and deeply as my father can himself."

"I thank thee, Herbert, honestly, for thy good feeling, so warmly expressed," said Robin, affected by his warmth, "and can assure ye both, that the friendliness of such as thee compensate richly for the evil thoughts which those who are high and wealthy in the land bear towards me. Believe me, I shall treasure the memory of this in my breast, as in some future hour, perhaps of sadness, it will cheer me to turn to it, and recall a time when there were some noble and pure-minded souls who were not ashamed to acknowledge me for a friend."

"Now, to change the subject, and refer to your situation — Your estates, when the news of this day's work reaches London, will assuredly be confiscated, and, unless you keep away, your life forfeited. I have, therefore, only to offer you and those you love an asylum in the green wood here with us and I can give you my word, that while the band continue together, thou and they will be safe."

"Your offer is noble, Robin," replied the knight; "but I scarce think there is so much danger to fear as you apprehend. I am closely allied to the Gowers, and they have influence at court, which they will exercise in my favor, and thus mitigate the king's wrath, who may impose a fine, but I think nothing further."

"I hope it may be no worse. However, do as you list, and should you find that affairs turn out as I surmise, the green wood shall still be a place of safety for thee."

"And should they, I shall proudly and thankfully accept your offer," rejoined the knight.

The evidence of the fight — such as dead bodies, broken weapons, etc. — were all removed, and Robin with the knight, his son, and half his men, returned to Barnsdale. When Sir Richard of the Lee and his son arrived at the castle, after an affecting meeting with his wife and Lilas, they dispatched a special messenger to London, with orders to learn from such of the knight's family as had the greatest influence all that was to be put in force against him. And immediately he had gained possession of it, to spare neither whip, spur, nor horse, in his return to the castle of the Lee.

The man obeyed his orders well, and he returned bearing news that the king was so exasperated at the defeat of his troops, that he had issued commands for a troop to proceed at once to the knight's castle seize the principal inmates, hang them on the branches of the neighboring trees and the commander of the troops, a Norman soldier of fortune, had deeds granted him, which secured the possession of the castle and the estates to him and to his heirs forever.

Also, that notices were sent to the counties Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, and Yorkshire, offering a great reward to anyone, or any body of men, who would capture Robin Hood, and bring him, dead or alive, into the hands of the sheriff of either county.

Sir Richard lost no time in acquainting Robin Hood with this intelligence, and acting upon his advice, everything the castle contained which was moveable was carried away and placed in the haunt at Barnsdale – a spacious cave, comfortably fitted up. After everything had been safely transported, Sir Richard and his wife, Herbert and Lilas, quitted their home in the Lee, to dwell with Robin Hood and his merrie men in the green wood, until such times as the ban was removed from his head, and he could again enter his castle as its lord, without molestation.

When the troop, led on by the newly-created possessor of the castle in the Lee, arrived, they found nothing but the bare walls to greet them – no living soul was near. The commander was rather astonished to find the place so desolate and deserted. But, having all his life been compelled to adapt himself to circumstances, he made the best he could of his situation, and was not long ere he succeeded in obtaining such necessaries as he required. He, however, found his vassals horribly refractory, and was not slow to discover that King Henry's gift was little more than a negative good. But, as his previous situation had been worse, it was not in their power to make him quit it, and so he kept it in spite of all the obstacles which were thrown in his way.



Chapter 9

*The kynge was wonder wroth with all,
And swore by the Trynyté,
I wolde I had Robyn Hode.
With eyen I might him se;
Then bespake a fayre old knight
That was treue in his fay,
There is no man in this countre
May have the knyghtes londes,
Whyle Robyn Hode may ryde or gone,
And bere a bow in his hondes:
Then bespake a proud fostere,
That stode by our kynge's kne,
If ye wyll se good Robyn,
Ye must do after me;
Make good chere, sayd Robyn,
Abbot, for charyte;
And for this ylke tydyng,
Blyssed mote thou be.
Now shalt thou se what lyfe we lede,
Or thou hens wende,
Than thou may enfourme our kynge,
Whan ye togyder lende.
Smyte on boldely, sayd Robyn,
I give thee large leve.
Anone our kynge, with that worde,
He folde up his sleve.
And sych a buffet he gave Robyn,
To ground he yede full nere.
I make myn avowe to God sayd Robyn,
Thou arte a stalworthe frere.*

----- A Lytell Geste of Robyn Hode
The Seventh Fytte

Three years elapsed subsequent to the events last narrated, without aught of interest taking place connected with Robin, save a few incidents similar to his meetings with Arthur-a-Bland and Gaspar-a-Tin. His band had increased in numbers, and his fame had spread over all England, as the bravest and gentlest outlaw the world ever saw. The interval we are passing over, albeit not altering Robin's situation in any particular degree, was one replete with anxiety and woe to Englishmen.

King Henry was dead. His son Richard had succeeded him, and, after exhausting the kingdom of almost all its wealth, had joined the Crusade, leaving his brother John regent, a prince who was noted for his dissipation, yet monstrous avarice, his craftiness and cunning, yet vacillating imbecility of mind.

During the period he exercised his sway, England groaned under the miseries his conduct, and that of the selfish wretches who surrounded him, produced. So far as lay in his power, Robin Hood relieved the heavy burden of the poorest classes around him, in Derbyshire, Yorkshire, and in Nottinghamshire, and accordingly was idolised by them.

But, for the money he disbursed to the woe-begone, the starved, and the homeless, he made terrible reprisals upon the wealthy churchmen and Normans he was fortunate enough to get in his power, suffering none to depart without paying a heavy ransom, and upon all occasions attacking every band of Norman troopers who came within his reach, even as Alfred the Great did the Danes, or, as he more fondly loved to consider, Hereward le Wake did the Normans in William the Conqueror's time, and, scattering them far and wide, proving himself in name and presence a terror to every one of Norman birth or extraction.

With him in the recesses of the wood, still dwelled Marian, the same in heart and in spirit, in manner and words, as she had been when he lived cheerfully on in the hope that she would one day be his. And in every thought and act they were still as gentle and affectionate to each other as they were when they were young and earnest lovers, who hung almost breathlessly on every word and look from each other, as if their existence was centred in them.

The change of years too, had brought no alteration in Will Scarlet and Maude. He was as enthusiastic in her praise as heretofore, and she as tender and anxious to preserve his happiness as she had ever been, and so they dwelled happily among the trees and flowers, suffering nothing trivial to disturb their contentment, and gathering joy and pleasure from every little event which could offer, in any way, an opportunity for doing so.

Little John and Much had reason to congratulate themselves upon their choice, and Will's brothers – absurd as the events connected with their marriage may appear – had no cause to repent their hasty wedding. Ere we quit them forever, there are two characters of whom we would speak – they are Allan and his wife, the Lady Christabel.

They had commenced living together after their marriage in Linton Abbey as if they were not destined long for this earth, but had only a short time remaining to prove how dearly they loved each other. The house in which they were domiciled had been built by Allan, and he had exercised

his utmost ingenuity and taste to render it as like a paradise as art and nature combined could make it, and he succeeded. He seemed to have nothing to wish for. Time flew by unheeded, as if he were in a dream of the rarest and most exquisite nature.

He never forgot that he had loved Christabel from childhood, and her memory was equally tenacious respecting him, nor did either forget they had endured a bitter separation for many years, and so strove to make up for the sadness of that time by the undeviating joy and sweetness of the present. Christabel bore him several children, who came among them like the budding forth of young flowers. They were always a sweet and choice addition to the beauty of the scene. Weeks flew by them like days, and days like hours. They would wander round their grounds, with their arms folded round each other, and, looking into each other's eyes, would fancy there was no other world but what they were then gazing on.

Christabel had never seen her father since the morning on which she was married. He had refused every overture that had been made to him by her or Allan, and, although it was the only disquiet she knew, yet, as he had never acted kindly to her – never, in his mildest moods, having acted as a father to her – her regret was less poignant than it must otherwise have been.

And when she heard of his death she wept, but not with the bitterness she would have done had he perished under different circumstances, in relation to his previous conduct to her. Allan had intended to advance his claim to the Nottingham earldom and baronetcy, with its possessions, but the king seized it, and it was bestowed afterwards on Prince John, among other earldoms which Richard Cœur de Lion presented to him before he quitted England for the Crusade. Allan, happy and contented where he was, did not seek to dispute the claim, and satisfied himself by dwelling peaceably with his wife and children, beloved by all, unmolested, for it was known he was under the especial protection of Robin Hood and his merrie men, and as happy as man could be, or could hope to be.

The constant attacks upon the Churchmen and Normans of any rank, by Robin and his men, at length grew to such an extent that it excited the peculiar notice of the Lord High Chancellor of England, Longchamp, Bishop of Ely, who had succeeded in getting the regency out of the hands of Hugh Pudsey, Bishop of Durham, a wealthy prelate, who had paid Richard an enormous sum for it, and lost it while Richard was yet in Normandy.

Longchamp determined to put an end to the outlaws and their abode, so fitted out an expedition of five hundred armed men, well-appointed and well-disciplined for the purpose. Prince John, who was leading a luxurious life of ease and dissipation, undertook its command, and went down to

Nottingham Castle, intending to rest there a short time and then proceed on the expedition. Robin Hood had little difficulty in learning everything relative to this intended attack upon him, and he resolved to render it an undoubted failure, without expending any blood. He therefore, disposed his men in such a manner that they could not be discovered, and some dressed themselves in various dresses and offered themselves as guides – on one occasion Robin himself doing so.

They were accepted, and as the forest covered between twenty and thirty miles of ground each way, they were led such a dance as a body of men never had the satisfaction of being before. There was scarce a miry spot in the forest they were not led through, marshes and fens they were embedded in, and as night drew on, they were seven or eight miles from Nottingham on their return, fagged and worn to death, without having met with aught save herds of deer.

When they entered Nottingham, there was scarce one of the party, save the guides, who were not ready to give up the ghost. Prince John recruited himself and men with a day's rest, and on the following one they marched forth again, but after a day of greater fatigue than the proceeding, they returned with the like success.

For a fortnight at various times this was repeated, with no better fortune, and, something attracting Prince John's attention at London, he departed from Nottingham and took his men with him, without striking a blow — leaving Robin Hood to act the same as before, and to congratulate himself upon his stratagem being eminently successful.

Two years subsequent to this, Richard Cœur de Lion returned to England; and prince John receiving a despatch from Philip, King of France, containing only the words –

“Take care of yourself, the devil is broken loose!”

and knowing from his monstrous misconduct that his brother Richard would deal roughly with him, shut himself up in Nottingham Castle. Richard, incensed, in the highest degree, when he heard all that his brother had been guilty of, stayed but three days in London, and with such troops, a mere handful, as were ready, marched against his brother. The castle was attacked, and held out but a short time, surrendering at discretion. Prince John, however, succeeded in escaping. Richard Cœur de Lion had noticed that his army had been joined by a strong body of yeomen, whose powers as archers had been the principal cause of the victory being gained. They were led on by one of gallant and commanding bearing, and no body of troops, disciplined in the highest degree, could have acted more admirably in concert than did they.

When the fight was over, and Richard was in the castle, he inquired particularly respecting these yeomen, who they were, and what was the name of their leader. Nobody could tell him, and on sending for their leader, both he and his men had disappeared, and nothing could be gained until the Sheriff of Nottingham, the same man Robin had deceived under the disguise of a butcher, being questioned, said he knew him and his men too well – that he was the noted and terrible outlaw, Robin Hood, with a band of ferocious villains whom he called his merrie men, who slew the king's deer, robbed Churchmen and Normans, and did many other vile acts.

Hal of the Keep, who, maugre his connection with Robin, had managed still to retain his situation in the castle, happened to stand by, and immediately chimed in by saying that he gave to the poor almost all he took from the rich, that for miles round he was looked upon and blessed as their guardian angel, and he enlarged so much on his good qualities, that he entirely forgot that he stood in the presence of the king, and grew quite eloquent in his praise.

Richard smiled as he witnessed the earnestness of Hal, and asked him if he was personally acquainted with him. This question recalled Hal's recollection, and turning red, said he had known him, and what he had repeated was the report of every poor man he had heard speak of him.

"Tush, man," said the king, noticing that Hal seemed disconcerted, "ne'er be ashamed to own a friend, e'en though he be an outlaw."

"By the Holy Trinity! an' he has done all thou sayest, he is a man to be proud of."

"By St. Austin! I would be glad to see this same outlaw, and I will, for he has done me service, and Richard of England suffers no man to serve him without requital. I' the morning tide I will go through the forest and see him."

And in the morning he went, attended by a body of soldiers, knights, and was led by the Sheriff of Nottingham, who had a great dislike to his position, through the forest for the purpose of meeting Robin. But our hero, who did not possess anything like implicit faith in kings, did as he had before done, when Prince John had been in search of him, and with equal success, for the king could not meet with him anywhere. Richard



was very fond of hunting, and when quite a youth, he had hunted much in Sherwood Forest. At that time the forest abounded in herds of deer; but Robin's men had made great havoc among them, and now, where he had been in the habit of seeing large herds, not one was visible.

This raised his anger, and the sheriff, who had some hopes that he should succeed in making the king as anxious to destroy Robin as ever Prince John had been, added to his wrath by everything he could invent, particularly in giving a history of the death of the preceding sheriff, and the rescue of Sir Richard of the Lee, by Robin, in such terms that the king in a rage exclaimed –

“By the face of God! I would I had this Robin Hood under my hand now, he should feel the weight of a reproof he should not lightly rise from. Mother of God! He hath carried on these pranks too long, we must check him. And for that same knight, whoe'er will smite off his head, and bring it to me, shall have the knight's lands. I will grant a charter for it, to have and to hold it forever more. I will seal it with my own hand. Do thou proclaim it, sheriff.”

“It shall be done, but let me suggest, my liege lord and king, that while Robin Hood lives, there's no man in the country can hold the lands, so long as he can hold the bow, so long will Sir Richard of the Lee's estates be untenable by any but himself. The knight to whom your royal father, King Henry of blessed memory, granted them, was unable for any length of time to remain. He was made so wretchedly unhappy, that he went to live in another part of the country, and obtained his revenues as he best could. He is since dead, and since that time no one has dwelled in the castle; the tenants keep it in good repair, but no one dares approach it but them.”

“Fore God, it is time we came to England!” cried Richard, “These lawless rogues must be taught that there are others have a voice in the disposal of property besides themselves. Lead on, we will hang up this Robin Hood, immediately we catch him.”

But he had no opportunity of keeping his promise. Day after day was the wood searched, but without the least success, Robin and his men contriving to evade all efforts to discover them. At length one man, who held the nominal office of forest keeper for the vicinity of Nottingham, was summoned, and asked if he could point out the best way of coming across Robin Hood, and he was made acquainted with what had been already done. His reply was singularly characteristic of Robin's fame. He shook his head and exclaimed –

“Were ye to continue as ye have done for a year or more, ye would never come within arrow shot of him. He knoweth of your purpose, and did it please him to fight with thee, his knowledge of the ground and its advantages are such that he would defeat thee didst thou attack him with twice five hundred troops.”

"But he hath no love for blood spilling, and ever avoids it where it can be done without compromising his honor or the safety of his people, and thus it is why he doth shun thee. But if thou really dost wish to see him, and see how he lives in the green wood, do thou to the abbey close at hand here, and dress thyself in an abbot's or friar's gear, and four or five of thy kights, not more, in like gear, and let me be your leader. I forfeit my head if you do not meet and dine with him and his merrie men in the forest. I will answer for thy safety with my life. Robin Hood, though he despoils church-men, does not maltreat them."

"Now, by the Holy Rood, your counsel likes me well, forester!" replied the king. "It shall be as thou sayest. I will don this disguise – although, by my father's beard! I do not think it will sit pleasantly on me – to the forest and partake of this outlaw's green wood hospitality. It will be an easy matter, on once finding his trysting place, to fall in with it again."

The king, ever impetuous, picked out four knights and had them clothed in monk's weeds, while he himself was clad in an abbot's habiliments. According to the arrangement made by the forester, there was a mail horse and two sumpter horses, as though they were bearing great wealth, and they were led carefully along. They had not advanced three miles, when the forester advanced to the king's side, and said –

"My liege, it is as I have said. Yonder standeth Robin Hood, Little John, and Will Scarlet, the three most noted men of the band."

"The face of God, but that is well!" cried Richard. "I am right glad of this, forester, we owe thee twenty golden merks. Speed, thou lazy beast!" he continued, spurring his steed, and riding towards Robin at a good speed, which, however, the forester advised him to check, or Robin would immediately suspect him to be no churchman.

As he reached Robin, he continued as though he would pass him, but Robin stepped out, seized the bridle of his horse, and stopped him.

"By your leave, sir abbot," he exclaimed, "You must abide with me awhile. You are welcome to the green wood and its merry inhabitants."

"Ungodly sinner!" cried Richard, trying to assume the language of the Church, "Who art thou who dost imperiously and profanely stay the progress of holy men on a sacred mission?"

"We are yeomen of this forest," replied Robin Hood, with a laugh, "and dwell in the green wood. We live upon the king's deer, and what we can gather from such richly-endowed churchmen as thee."

"Thou'rt a modest rascal, truly," observed the king, trying to hide a smile, "to tell me to my beard that thou dost live by eating my – our – king's deer and by robbing churchmen. St. Hubert! Thou hast at least the merit of candour."

"It is our only shift," returned Robin. "You, on the contrary, have revenues, church lands, tythes, rents, and a store of gold, and out of all this, for Saint Charity, thou canst grant us a sum of money for our simple wants, for we clothe and feed the poor, which you do not. And we nor guzzle nor overeat ourselves, as do ye; therefore, our wants are fewer than thine, who hath more gold than wants, and we more wants than gold."

"Thou speakest frankly, yeoman," said the king, almost forgetting his assumed character, "and I like thy bearing well. Thou dost look more honest than I fear thou art, but, natheless, for Saint Charity's sake, I will give thee all the money I have with me, which is forty golden merks. You must know I have stayed at Nottingham since the king has been there, and, by Him who died on the Rood, his majesty hath nearly emptied my pockets. Still, thou'rt welcome to the money, for I do like the looks of thee and those sturdy yeomen with thee, and were it an hundred, thou should'st have it as freely as I now give thee this." So saying, he handed over a bag containing forty golden merks.

"Thou'rt a marvel among churchmen!" exclaimed Robin, laughing, "and but that I am sworn to let no churchman pass free, I would return thee thy gold. However, thy generosity shall in no wise suffer. Thy take thou this twenty merks back again for thine own spending, and the other twenty, acting up to mine oath – which our dear Lady doth know I have never broken – shall be devoted to the interests of my merrie men."

"Thou dost act generously, outlaw, and I like thee the better for't," uttered Richard, with warmth. "The king has a great desire to see thee, having heard of thee, and bade me, did I fall in with thee, to greet thee with this signet, and bid thee to Nottingham, to meat and meal, for the service thou and thy men didst him when forcing the castle. He would fain know why thou didst so suddenly disappear when thou hadst done it?"

"Should it be my good fortune to meet with his majesty, I shall not hesitate to tell him," rejoined Robin, "but at present we will say nothing about it. However, for the love I bear Richard, who is a true knight and Englishman, though he be of Norman extraction, I will take thee and thy monks to my trysting tree and thou shalt there taste a forester's hospitality."

"I take thee at thy word, yeoman. I would fain see how a man thrives with grass for a couch and leaves for a roof. By the Holy Cross! I have tasted their sweets, and have not found them unseemly. and my life on't, thy sinews are none the weaker for feeding on venison and sleeping on turf!"

Robin could have told him they managed things better, and have shown him the haunt underground was as well-furnished as many a baronial

mansion, but that would have been exceeding the limits of a prudence he found himself always to observe, therefore, he replied only by a smile and said –

“This way, sir abbot,” as he led his horse and its rider into the recesses of the wood, followed by Little John, Will Scarlet, and the five fictitious monks. As they went their way, a deer at the top of his speed bounded by them. In an instant Robin fitted a shaft to his bow, which was always ready, and discharged it. The deer sprung high into the air and fell dying upon the turf, with the shaft buried in his side.

“Well struck! Well struck!” shouted Richard, delightedly. “A yeoman’s shot, and fairly done.”

“Tis nothing, Sir Abbot,” returned Robin, eyeing the king with surprise. “There is not a member of my band who cannot strike a deer i’ that fashion, shooting under hand. My wife can perform far more difficult feats of archery, with the greatest ease.”

“Thy wife, Robin! echoed the king. “Hast thou a wife? By the Mass, but I should like to see the maiden who would dwell with thee in the green wood!”

“Thou shalt see many,” replied Robin, “who prefer a true heart with a forest home to a false one though surrounded by the comforts which a town can boast.”

“Thou shalt see my wife, sir abbot,” cried Will Scarlet, who overheard the last remarks, “an’ if thou dost not say she would grace a king’s palace, then confess thyself of no taste.”

“St. Dunstan and the holy saints!” exclaimed Richard, “but ye may well call yourselves merrie men. Beshrew me, but I long to see them.”

He had not long to wait. By this time they had reached the trysting tree, and Robin wound on his horn, three mots or blasts, *waa, tra, la*, so loudly, that the wood echoed the sound with almost as much distinctness as the notes were given and a minute scarce elapsed ere seven score men, all clad in dresses of Lincoln green, armed with bows and quarter staffs, appeared.

Each, as they passed the tree, made a low obeisance to Robin, and then they all arranged themselves in squares and files, according to the capacity of the glade, with a celerity and perfection of discipline which surprised Richard amazingly.

“By St. Austin!” he muttered, “but this is wondrous sight, and a right seemly one also. As I am a-a-an abbot, by our dear Lord’s pain! Methinks his men are more at his bidding than my rascals are at mine. I will observe closer, one may learn something even of an outlaw.”

The dinner was spread – a right sumptuous one: fat venison, cooked in all fashions, bread —the best made at the time — and plenty of ale and red wine to moisten the meal.

“By my mother’s conscience – and Dame Eleanor has so little that it is a rare thing to swear by – but this is a dinner worthy of a king!” exclaimed Richard, eating voraciously, and with every evidence of enjoying it greatly. “Thy wine, too, Robin, is of exceeding good vintage. By the heart of the lion, noble beast! but this green wood living is right good. I confess me I do not wonder thou dost hold thy sway so strongly when I see thy measures. And now, having dined – and, God be praised! I have had such a meal – I would see the beauties of your forest – these same sylvan dames you were speaking of – these pretty dryads who would grace a palace.”

Robin bade Will Scarlet fetch them, while he gave orders to prepare for sports of all descriptions.

“Make thee good cheer, sir Abbott,” said Robin to him, “Now thou shalt see what manner of life we lead, and when thou art again in presence of good King Richard, thou wilt tell him, thus do the merrie men of Sherwood Forest.”

“Never fear, good yeoman,” replied Richard; “His majesty shall know all thy doings, even as if he were himself present.”

“Thou’rt the most gracious churchman my fortune ever brought me in contact withal,” exclaimed Robin, and waved his hand. At this signal, twenty-five merrie men sprung from the general body, with bent bows, and Richard, on the impulse of the moment, shrunk back, as if he feared they were about to shoot him, but they elevated their bows in the air, and fired altogether upwards. Richard followed the arrows with his eyes until they went beyond his vision, and then turned to Robin for an explanation. Our hero pointed out a circle marked in the ground, with a diameter of two feet, and bade him watch it. The words had scarce left his lips, when the shafts descended and transfixed the earth within the circle, not one falling without the line.

“That is a singular way of firing at a target,” cried the king, admiringly, “and well pricked it is too. By the Lord! Robin Hood, but a man had need be well increased in armor to get quit of thine and thy men’s arrows.”

“Let him be ever so well and closely incased in steel, I doubt not but I could find a place to put a shaft in him,” said Robin Hood.

Will Scarlet now have appeared, leading Marian and Maude, both habited in dresses of Lincoln green, and each bearing a bow and sheaf of arrows. They were followed by Barbara, Winifred, and Lilas, and then came a long troop of young females who were wedded to various members of the band

The Lionheart opened his eyes, and gave a long stare as he saw them approach, but his gaze was one of admiration, especially when Marian, with blushing cheeks, was presented to him by Robin Hood as his wife.

"Fore God! yeoman," he cried, "and queen of the forest and foresters too! Gramercy! Thou hadst need be proud of so beauteous a damsel as this. Fair lady, I greet thee as queen of this broad wood! And suffer me to pay thee the same homage which it is the duty of thy subjects to render thee."

And before he could be stayed, he knelt on one knee, and kissed Marian's hand with an appearance of great reverence.

"I thank thee for thy courtesy, good abbot," said Marian, withdrawing her hand, "but I prithee rise. It becomes not one of thy station or order to bend to anyone save thy Maker."

"A reproof, and a right moral one, by all that is sacred!" muttered the King; "and from an outlaw's wife in the green wood. By the Holy Mass! But this is a living wonder."

"This is my wife, sir abbot, cried Will Scarlet, as the King rose, and bowed low to Marian as she passed and took her seat under the trysting tree, introducing Maude to his notice.

The King turned his eye so her, and smiling, ejaculated, "and this is the damsel who would grace a king's home?" Will nodded affirmatively. "Our lady! But thou'rt right. By your leave, lady, the kiss of grace could never be better bestowed than on so fair a cheek as thine." So saying, his Lionhearted majesty imprinted a kiss upon the forehead of Maude, who curtsied as she received it, and hastened immediately to the side of Marian,

"A word in your ear, abbot," said Will, drawing near to the king, "Thou hast good taste, and art a churchman, as a churchman should be. Thou hast never need to fear passing through this wood again, for after this day thou wilt have honorable escort and good entertainment whenever occasion brings thee here."

"I thank thee for thy courtesy, yeoman," said the king and turned to Robin Hood, with a smile, to see if Will had uttered more than he was justified in doing. But our hero confirmed it, and the king reiterated his acknowledgments of the obligation. "Ha! What have you here?" he cried, as Will's two sisters and Lilas advanced. "By my halidame, but your dryads are indeed fairies." He took Lilas by the hand, and muttered, "By'r Lady! I thought nothing in the world could compare with Berengaria, but here is one who, even to my prejudiced mind, surpasses her. Fair damsel," he said, aloud, "thou hast chosen a wild life for one so young and tender as thou dost appear. Hast thou no fear that the rough winds of the forest may destroy so fragile a flower as thou art?"

"The wind often spares the blossom, when it destroys the flower, reverend father," replied Lilas, and there is one here who is far dearer to me than life itself. I should find it pleasanter to be here with him, were there no comforts, than in a sheltered place abounding in luxuries, away from him."

"Thou dost well to say so, gentle one, if he is worthy of thee," responded Richard, with something like a sigh, for the recollection of the happy days when he first loved the King of Navarre's beautiful daughter and she responded to it, passed across his mind.

"He is worthy of a love far surpassing mine. Although I love him as dearly and earnestly as nature has given me power to do," she exclaimed, enthusiastically, and the next instant turning crimson, as she beheld the large blue eye of Richard fixed on her with an ardent gaze. She withdrew her hand gently from his grasp and when he had paid a compliment to Barbara and Winifred, they passed on to Marian's side, where the rest of the young females had already arranged themselves.

"I make mine avow to God, Robin" said the king, energetically, "there is not a court in Europe can boast so fair a display of loveliness as can thine, although it be in the green wood. Well, well, I have seen the women of all lands, but there are none equal to the sweet, quiet beauty of the Saxon maidens. Beshrew me, but one of those sweet faces I have just looked upon, is worth a hundred eastern, or indeed any foreign dames."

"I am glad to hear thee say so. It sounds as if thou hadst the true Saxon blood in thy veins," exclaimed Robin, warmly; "I have never been out of the three counties, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, and Yorkshire; but I can well believe they do not equal our Saxon maidens in beauty."

"No, that I can answer for," cried Will; "I have been though a great deal of France, and saw nothing to compare with Maude. And if she is not a specimen of English beauty, I should like to know what is, that is all."

"You have served, then?" said Richard, looking hard at him.

"Yes!" replied Will, "under King Henry, in Aquitaine, Pioc tou, Barfleur, Evreux, Beauvais, Rouen, and a quantity of other places."

"Hum!" said the king, and turned his head away, for fear Will should recognize him, "and I have little doubt wert a good soldier. Ah! Robin Hood, I see your people are preparing for sport. I shall be glad to see what they can do."

"That you shall, and speedily," answered Robin; "You shall see today such woodcraft as never was equaled by any archers in the world. I know what can be done by a shaft and bow, and I know what it requires to accomplish the power to make them do what the will decrees, and therefore, feel myself free to say there is not another body of archers who can do such feats with the bow as can my merrie men."

"I can believe thee. They began by a singular and clever feat, admirably performed," observed Richard, "and I dare say will finish better than they begun."

Robin then commanded his men to perform various feats of archery, which, accustomed as Richard was to seeing good use made of the bow, perfectly astonished him, especially when the females took their places, and, firing at the target, hit the bull's eye without an exception.

"I would gladly know how you manage to teach your followers to be such accurate archers," exclaimed Richard.

"Thou shalt see," replied Robin. "They are in a course of practice at a willow wand through a garland. I will have one set up, and you shall see the method I take to teach them. Much, see that the rose garlands are hung upon the wands."

Much obeyed the order, and in a short space of time, two wands were erected, each with a garland hanging from the top, so that the top of the wand appeared perpendicularly through the circle of flowers.

"Now," cried Robin, loudly, to the merrie men as they came up to shoot at this mark, "Whoever fails to hit the willow wand between the garland, shall lose his best arrow, giving it to me, let it be ever so much a favorite with him, besides receiving a buffet on the bare head. Let every man, therefore, shoot his best, for, by our Lady! I will spare none of ye. I will shoot with ye, and if I miss I will receive the like punishment."

Many of the men fired, but most of them missed it, although their arrows went within an inch. They, however, received the punishment, and bore it very patiently. Some saved themselves by just grazing the wand. At length Robin shot and cleft the wand in pieces. A fresh one was put up, and Will Scarlet fired and grazed the wand, Little John doing the like.

Much, and Gilbert of the White Hand, hit the wand full and fairly, many others followed with various success. When as many had fired as Robin deemed sufficient, he separated those who had hit the wand, and paring the end of the rod much finer than before, he placed it up again to be fired at. He fired the first shot, and though from the distance he stood it looked no more than a piece of thread, his arrow struck it and shivered it to pieces.

Another was put up, and Will Scarlet fired but missed it — he received his buffet, and vowed nobody could hit it but Robin. Little John missed it and received his blow, while the glade rung with shouts of laughter. Much shared the same fate; Gilbert of the White, who was a famous shot, hit it, and was loudly cheered. All the rest missed it. A second essay was made, and every one missed it, all receiving their punishment with as much merriment as those who witnessed its award.

Robin fired the last shot, but desirous to show the pretended abbot that he made no distinction between himself and his men in such cases, he purposely missed the wand by an inch.

“Aha!” cried Gilbert, who looked upon the miss with the utmost astonishment. “Master, thou hast missed it, thou hast lost an arrow. Stand forth and take your pay.”

“I am ready,” cried Robin, laughing, “Take your choice from my sheaf and which of ye will give me the buffet? Thou, Little John, thou art the strongest? Do thou give it me!”

“Not I,” said Little John; “I should never look on my right hand with pleasure again.”

“Nor I,” exclaimed Will.”

“Nor I,” cried three or four other voices.

“This is foolish childishness,” said Robin, seriously; “I did not hesitate to strike any of thee. I have earned the punishment, and in strict justice must receive it. However, since none of ye will give it, sir abbot, to you I deliver my arrow, and I pray thee, sir, serve thou me even as thou hast seen me serve my men.”

“Nay,” said the king, laughing, “By thy leave, good yeoman, it does not become my order to strike any one, especially so good a yeoman as thou. I would grieve no man, least of all thee, Robin.”

“Thou wilt not grieve me, good abbot. Smite boldly, never fear. I give thee fair leave to smite as becomes a man,” exclaimed Robin.

“I shall hurt thee too much, my sport is some-what of the roughest,” observed the king.

“I am not so tender as a weak boy,” rejoined Robin, “and as I awarded and bestowed a buffet to all who missed the wand, I prithee, as I have missed it, give me one, or I shall begin to think our observance of stern and strict justice is weakening.”

“As thou wilt,” cried the king, folding up his sleeve and baring an arm of great muscular proportions.

He then struck Robin a blow upon the shoulder, which hurled him to the ground like lightning, but Robin was to his feet in a moment, exclaiming—

“I make my avow to God, thou’rt the most stalwart friar I ever met with. There is too much pith in thine arm for such a holy calling as thine. Thou canst, I will wager, shoot or play the quarter staff better than you canst bear a crosier.”



King Richard Buffets Robin

"I think I might do as much," said the king, smiling, "or handle a sword, or wield a spear and shield."

"Thy speech savours more of the field than the church," observed Robin, looking wistfully upon him. "I can read thy face well, and it tells me that it is all unused to the cant of false sanctity. I would gladly learn who thou art. Strange thoughts rise within me,"

"I would have thee set them at rest – let them subside. Thou shalt know anon whether I am or am not what I seem to be," uttered the king quickly, turning his head away.

Sir Richard of the Lee, who had been absent all this time, now approached to speak to Robin, and as his eyes lighted upon the king, he started, recognized him — having seen him often when a prince— and turned quickly to see if Robin and his men appeared to know the real rank of their guest. But they were all engaged in various sports, and it was evident from their manner that they were quite ignorant of the quality of the disguised monarch, Sir Richard immediately whispered –

"Know you the name and rank of him who stands here in the garb of a monk?"

"Not for certainty, but I have a shrewd suspicion," returned Robin; "I think that light sandy hair, and those extraordinary blue eyes, can belong to but one man, and he is —"

"Richard of the Lion heart, King of England," said Sir Richard, his earnestness getting the better of his prudence, and speaking audibly.

"Ha!" exclaimed the king, and at the same moment Robin and Sir Richard knelt at his feet, the former saying –

"I know thee well, now, your majesty – thou'rt Richard of England, whom God save! And as thou hast seen how we live, hast heard what little violence we have done, and when thou dost know that we have all been driven here by the most unjust and wicked oppressions, I do beg and hope thou wilt grant grace to all who are here with me."

"Arise, Robin Hood," said the king, "and tell me why thou didst mingle the men with my troop, and help me to compel the castle of Nottingham to surrender?"

"Because," returned Robin, speaking frankly, "having heard much of thy deeds, I had learned to esteem thee, even as men call thee a lion-hearted hero, one who like a true knight fought thine own battles, and were ever a friend to the oppressed. Else not thy title as King of England should have made me but now bend at thy feet. Hating and execrating, as every lover of England must do, thy brother John, and his adherents, and learning you had come to England, and from London had advanced to Nottingham, for the purpose of bringing him to account, I marshalled my men, and led them on to aid in bringing so desirable a purpose all the success it deserved."

“Having succeeded, I retired again to my haunt in this wood. I was aware of the strict search you made for me, and purposely avoided meeting thee, as I could foresee easily, had we met while you were under the influence of what a lying sheriff had uttered, there would have been much blood spilt, with little good gained – for your majesty may see I can hold my station in this wood against five times the number of my men, and thou hast, I know, a better use for thy men than putting them against men who are expert at their weapons, who know every inch of ground they are contesting, who would never surrender with life, and who have done no wrong in being born Saxon.”

“Thou hast answered me in the true spirit of an honest heart, Robin Hood,” replied the king. “Thou hast dealt candidly with me, and I feel pleased with thee. Freely I forgive thee and thy men all thou hast done against the laws, because I find that thou hast had the power of doing much evil and hast not exercised it.”

“But on the contrary, have succored those who needed aid, and levied thy contributions only upon those who could well spare what thou hast taken from them. I would forgive thee, unconditionally, were it only for not having added to the miseries this poor country has endured during my absence, when hundreds in thy situation would have done so without compunction. But when I know that the poor and needy, the outcast and the sufferer of all descriptions, who came within thy province, have been relieved, their sorrows and wants mitigated, their cares and griefs soothed by thee, whom men brand as an outlaw, by the grace of God, I see so little to pardon, that my tongue can scarce shape itself to speak the word.”

“Yet, since forest laws have been infringed, and the rich have been made to disgorge a portion of their wealth in a manner which the law disallows, and thou art thereby rendered liable to be its victim, I hereby, in the presence of these knights, and when in Nottingham Castle will ratify my words by deeds, pardon thee and thy men freely and fully, removing from thee and them the ban of outlawry, reinstating thee in the rights and privileges of freemen – so help me the grace of God!”

“Long live King Richard of the Lion Heart!” cried the knights.

“God keep and save thee to be the blessing to thy people thou hast proved to me and those around me!” exclaimed Robin, in a deep tone of voice, bending his knee and kissing the king’s hand. Then he sprung to his feet, and, throwing up his head proudly, blew such a blast on his bugle that the forest echoes never woke to before and on the instant every sport was quitted by those engaged in them. The scouts out in all parts of the forest obeyed the summons, and soon the glade was filled by the whole band of merrie men. When they had formed an extensive semicircle, Robin waved his hand for silence, and cried –

“My merrie men all, bend your knees to the earth. Here stands our sovereign lord and king, Richard of the Lion Heart! Uncover our heads, and pay him the homage which, as King of England, and, what is dearer to our hearts, an English King, is his due.”

Robin Hood set the example, and, while yet upon his knee, he made them acquainted with the King's clemency, and bidding them to their feet, said—

“Now let the old wood ring with your cheers – such cheers as you know how to give – such cheers as such noble generosity deserves.”

The merrie men needed no second command, but gave breath to a tremendous hurrah, that might have been heard for miles, and repeated it until Robin checked it, and the king spoke again.

“By God's mercy!” he cried, “With such a troop of gallant hearts to back me as you have here, I'd keep the whole country in subjection. Wilt thou, Robin, and thy men, with me to Nottingham? I have much to do there. I give thee my royal word thou shalt be treated nobly, and thy trust shall be safe and true. I may perhaps need thy aid, and in return ask of me any boon thou wilt, and it shall be thine.”

“Thy word is pledge strong enough for me,” said Robin. “I will readily, with seven score men, attend thee, and in thine whole army thou wilt find no truer followers than Robin Hood and the merrie men of Sherwood Forest.”

“Thy readiness has my thanks, Robin Hood, and you shall find Richard of England knows how to reward a good service, willingly and promptly accorded,” exclaimed the king; “Now let thy people to thy sports again, and hand me that flagon of red wine, which I warrant me came out of some churchman's cellar, for it is too good to have come from any other place. And now tell me who is yonder giant, for I have no other name for him. Beshrew me but I thought Richard Cœur de Lion no very small bird, but yon fellow makes me look like a chicken.”

“That is a follower of mine,” returned Robin Hood; “He is next in command to myself, but he has a title far higher, for he is my dearest friend – the noblest, proudest, most gallant, and yet most gentle spirit of any man I ever met with since I could discriminate between an honest heart and a knave.”

“He would shed a tear at a sad story, but stand opposed to an army, and fight unflinchingly until he was cut to pieces, without budging an inch or winking an eyelid. His heart's as true as steel and as pure as gold. He is the best quarter staff player in the world, and an expert and accurate archer, as you have seen. In truth, he is a friend to be proud of, for he is a man in every sense of the word, back and edge.”

“Ha! that is praise indeed,” replied the king, scanning Little John, who was the person in question, with an admiring eye. “I would speak with the yeoman. How do you distinguish him?”

“His name, your majesty, is John Naylor, but we call him Little John, as you may guess, from his size,” returned Robin.

“By the Mass! But a band of such Little Johns would have astonished the infidel dogs in no small degree,” exclaimed Richard, laughing. “Ho! You forest tree – you Tower of Babylon – Little John as they call thee! Come hither, man. I would speak with thee.”

Little John approached, and, doffing his cap, stood in front of the King, quietly waiting his commands. Richard put several questions to him respecting his strength, inspected his limbs with an air of astonishment, and tried feats of strength with him. Richard, who was immensely strong, however, found himself greatly inferior in strength to Little John, particularly in one instance, where Richard bade him hold him in as firm a grasp as he could, and he would endeavor to wrest himself out of it.

Little John obeyed him, and held him as if he had been screwed in a vice. The king made tremendous efforts, but could not move, and at length declared Little John to be the strongest man he ever met with, and Little John told him in return that he had no reason to complain of want of strength, as he had no easy job in holding him.

Richard then joined in many of the sports, only to prove how the merrie men, one and all, excelled in everything they practiced, as a sport or requisite accomplishment. Richard declared the scene to be the happiest and most festive he had ever witnessed, and entered into the full enjoyment of it with as much zest as any one there who had no rank to lay aside. At length, when the sun began to decline, and the soft twilight began to take the place of daylight, and the heat of the day had subsided into a refreshing coolness, dances were indulged in, songs were poured forth, and all pastimes, which might be more pleasant, and receive additional charms by being lighted by the moon’s mild beams, were partaken and performed. That night the king of England slept soundly and sweetly beneath the branches of the trysting tree, and in the morning when he arose, after partaking heartily of a repast spread before him, declared his intention of at once returning to Nottingham.

“Hast thou any garbs similar to those worn by thy men, Robin?” inquired Richard. “If thou hast, and will supply myself and knights with them, I think we shall meet with some sport on our return to Nottingham. Your people in office are ever extra officious when they deem their superiors near to scrutinize their conduct, and I doubt not that we shall see some choice specimens of bravery exhibited on the part of the high sheriff and his gallant followers.”

"We have plenty of dresses," replied Robin, laughing. "Your majesty and followers can, if you list, change the semblance of knavery into that of honesty, and from churchmen be transformed into yeomen. But, if you look for bravery in the high sheriff or his men, you may as well search for a herd of deer in a hostel, charity in an abbot, or virtue in a Norman."

"Thou think'st but lightly of priests and Normans," returned Richard, with a laugh. "But let me tell thee, friend Robin, I have found gallant hearts among the latter, and considerable virtue in many of the former."

"Cases of exception," exclaimed Robin, merrily, "which only makes my assertion the stronger."

"I care not to argue the point, Robin Hood," remarked the king, shaking his head with a smile; "So we will, as I know my presence to be needed, on to the town."

His request was complied with, he was clothed in a dress similar to those worn by the merrie men, and all his accoutrements were in every respect the same. His five attendants were also habited in the like manner, and, after bidding a merry farewell to Marian and the damsels assembled to witness his departure, he proceeded on his way, accompanied by Robin Hood, Little John, Will Scarlet, Much, and seven score of the merrie men. As they rode along, Richard, who was no mean hand in the use of the bow, tried his skill in opposition to Robin's, but with so little success, that he cried out at length—

"God help me! It is of no use to attempt to compete with thee in the use of the bow. Thou hast given me every odds, and yet hath defeated me. It is no game to play with thee — were I to shoot from this to doomsday, I should not get a game of thee."

"An' your majesty had had the practice I have, you might shoot as well as I," returned Robin.

"I doubt it mightily," observed Little John; "Each man has some gift in which he excels beyond any other, and it is of no use to try to compete with him in it. I have practiced at the bow longer than thee, Robin, but cannot shoot like thee. But with the quarter staff — and I say it modestly — I think no man is better, perhaps not so good. But then it is my gift, and that's the secret of it."

"That's the philosophy of it," said the King, laughing.

"Yes" replied Robin, "Little John is our forest philosopher."

"It is the reason of it," remarked Little John, quietly.

They now approached near the town, and according to the King's desire, commenced, shouting lustily. The cheers soon drew the attention of the townspeople, who no sooner saw the body of merrie men coming,

armed to the teeth, openly into town, and knowing, because the sheriff had spread it though the town that the king had gone in disguise to take Robin Hood, they immediately concluded that his majesty had been slain, and the outlaw had come to a slaughter the inhabitants, and pillage the town. The people ran here and there in the greatest affright, alarm bells were rung, the town troops were called out, but the high sheriff was nowhere to be found. The troops in the castle were summoned, but they were ordered to remain until there was some foundation for the rumour. But when it was seen that they were marching up the town, then they turned out and prepared to oppose them.

“Here come our fighting dogs,” cried Richard, laughing. “Now, by St. Mary Magdalen! We did not think the townspeople were so chary of their lives, beshrew us but they seem to think it pleasant to live as long as they can. We do not see my lord the sheriff or his doughty followers among them.”

“No,” replied Robin, “They find more charms in a homely fireside than a fighting field, so they have hastened to enjoy it.”

“Ha! Our rascals are going to speak with their crossbows. By St. Denis we must stop them. Will this horn talk?” said the king, hastily raising to his mouth a horn which had been presented to him with the dress.

“Your majesty can make it speak good language, if you have breath enough,” returned Robin.

“By our halidame! Then it shall say some good mots,” cried the king, making a pun upon the word —notes on the horn being formerly called mots— and blew two loud blasts in the shape of a signal, which was at once recognized, and responded to, by a loud cheer on the part of his bowmen, who immediately recovered their weapons and awaited his approach.

The news of the king’s arrival in amicable company with the ‘Prince of Outlaws’ spread as fast as did the news of his approach, for the purpose, as they imagined, of pillage and slaying. And those who had sought refuge in their houses, now came forth in throngs to greet the band. No sooner was it known that Robin Hood might be acknowledged openly, without compromising personal safety, than hundreds pressed round him to welcome him – to grasp his hand, or even touch his clothes, and on all sides might be heard echoed by hundreds of voices, ‘the noble Robin Hood’ – ‘the gallant yeoman’ – ‘the bonny outlaw’ – ‘the gentle Robin Hood’ – until Richard could not but exclaim–

“By my crown and scepter, methinks thou’rt king here, Robin Hood, and not we – at least thou’rt king of their hearts.”

“Ah, your majesty,” replied Robin, shaking his head, “it is but the homage of an hour! These same fellows, whose tongues are so familiar with my name, did you turn your countenance from me, would be the first, if they had the courage, to hunt me to the death.”

“Thou’rt right, Robin, the knaves are the same everywhere,” replied the king. “He who has the strength of mind and power to keep himself in a state high above them, is their hero, whom they pretend to idolize, but let once fortune serve him a slippery trick, and they who are loudest in his favour are ever readiest to thrust him down. The dogs! Too well we know it.”

“If report speak true respecting what you have endured on your return from the Holy Land,” rejoined Robin, “your majesty has good reason to say so.”

“I’ faith, Robin, report must go a very long way out of its road if its account exceeded what we did undergo,” exclaimed Richard. “By the holy saints! We can tell thee, Robin, our temper has been sore tried. But no matter; we are once more king in our own land, and, by the Rood! There’s many shall be made to know it, too, to their ruth. Look ye, now, how these knaves use their lungs; their tongues are wagging faster than the hoofs of an Arab’s courser at full speed; and yet these same churls, when we entered the town to bring our graceless brother at our feet, were wondrous sluggish, and showed but very cautious symptoms of joy at our return to England.”

“Fearing, we suppose, with our handful of men, that we should not be able to reduce the castle, and John still be in the ascendant. But we taught them different, and now you see how the curs bespatter us with their beastly flattery. Pah! It sickens us. We had rather John had their praise and dust-licking services than ourselves. Face of God! Their hate would sit more pleasantly on us than their love. Had we been unable to make the castle surrender, we should not have received the service of one of these same rogues, who seem as if they are now ready to lay down their lives for us.”

“By-the-bye, that reminds us that to your timely aid we owe that victory, and for that service we are indebted to you a boon, which, ask of us when you will, we grant it.”

“It is on my lips, and has been since thou did’st a short time back graciously please to tell me thus much,” returned Robin. “It is in favour of one who now accompanies me, and for some time has sought refuge with me in Sherwood. He is a noble knight, and if your majesty will so far favour me as to listen to his story, I have no doubt but that you will with pleasure grant the boon as soon as asked.”

"It is much in this same knight's favour," observed Richard, "whate'er the cause which made him dwell with thee in thy leafy home, that thou dost undertake to plead his cause. We have given ye our kingly word. We will grant the boon ye ask, and as thou sayest it is in the knight's favour, he may rejoice, for his desire is obtained. Still would gladly hear what has lost him his estate, and what thou hast to tell us in his behalf "

Thereupon Robin related to him Sir Richard the Lee's story, and the king betrayed the greatest interest in the recital. When our hero had concluded, he said –

"By'r Lady! But he has been much ill-used, and thou hast acted nobly to him. It shall not be said of Richard of England that he would not profit by a good example. Let us see this same knight."

Robin led him up to the king. "Sir Richard of the Lee," cried he, directly the knight stood before him, "Thy gallant friend, Robin Hood, hath possessed us with thy history and to show thee what we think of his conduct and of thy misfortunes, we reinstate thee in thy lands and free thee from all government levies and contributions for one twelvemonth, besides reversing the decree of outlawry against thee, leaving thee as stainless as if it had never been laid upon thee. Attend at the castle, and we will execute in form what we now speak; and we leave thee, Robin Hood, still the boon to ask, which we will grant, whatever, it be"

"What shall I say to thee, most gracious monarch? How thank thee for thy great clemency?" exclaimed Sir Richard of the Lee, his heart overflowing with emotion at Richard's generosity.

"Hold thy tongue man," replied Richard. "Return to thy lands, and be chary how you offend a member of the church again."

"Your majesty is a king in your generosity as you are in all other things," observed Robin Hood; "and it would ill become me in any way to limit it. I therefore accept the boon in the same spirit as that which made you offer it to me. But, with your majesty's permission, will wait a short time ere I ask it."

"Ask it when you will, it is thine," returned the king. "Come, let us on to the castle. Thou didst treat us well while in the green wood, it shall be very singular if thou'rt not feasted to thine heart's content in Nottingham Castle. By the way, thy men have a choice way of cooking venison, and the flavour the fresh air gave it made us eat hugely, and deem the repast sumptuous."

"Your majesty had a right to eat heartily of the venison," remarked Robin, with a laugh, "for while it ran in the wood it was considered as belonging to you."

"Ours or any man's who could bring it down with a shaft, thou dost mean, Robin," replied Richard, smiling; "It was considered ours by everybody but thou and three hundred of thy people; thou and they seemed to think it more thine than anyone's."

"I fear me that if we had not thought thus, your majesty," returned Robin, "there would have been many a gallant heart suffered sorely with hunger."

"Very likely; but we can assure thee, Robin," said the king, "we are not too glad to see the havoc that has been made in the deer since we have been from England. We fear that if thou and thy men dwell there much longer, there will be none in the wood."

"Your majesty is mistaken, or at least misinformed, and with a view to prejudice your majesty against me. I can give you my word there are more deer at the present time in the forest, than there were when I first recollect it."

"How can that be," asked the king, "when so many have made their dinners of them for so long? and how was it we saw so few as we entered the forest?"

"Because, your majesty," replied Robin, "they have shifted their quarters to the more southern part of the forest. We have made it our study to increase the breed and improve it, and we have succeeded. Upon the word of a Saxon, there are more deer than ever there were, and of a much finer breed."

"We are pleased to hear thee say so, and believe that thou dost speak the truth, Robin," exclaimed the king. "By the Holy Rood! We can tell thee it went hard with us to be friendly with thee, when we kept thinking of our deer. We are glad to find the wood has not suffered so much, and that thou and no many human beings have been supported — we should say — amply."

"Never lived a body of men with fewer wants, and those few so fully gratified, guided by simpler laws, or happier than have I and my merrie men, your majesty," exclaimed Robin, enthusiastically.

"We can believe so from what we have seen," uttered the king.

Conversing thus, they took their way up the town to Nottingham castle. It was gratifying to see Robin Hood, in the highest degree, to see himself in juxtaposition with a monarch renowned for his prowess and gallantry, surrounded by his true-hearted Saxon followers, and marching through the town amid the cheers and acclamations of a populace who had but a very short while preceding been expecting to see him led past them to grace a gallows. Had all his acts been those of a knight, and done under the eye of noble dames and crowned heads, he could not have been

treated with more courtesy, or hear his deeds spoken of with greater enthusiasm. It made him smile as he heard some one relate to another the way he had treated several dignitaries of the church, and laud his conduct to the skies for having done so.

Then came tales of his charities and kindly considerations for his poorer brethren, and blessings might have been heard on all sides. In short, had he been an emperor celebrated for noble and good acts, instead of an outlaw dwelling in the wild wood, he could not have received a heartier or more earnest reception than he did on that memorable day. He entered Nottingham Castle and Richard kept his word of feasting him sumptuously and after that of signing a deed, removing from him the decree of outlawry, reinstating him in his rights, titles, and possession of his estates in Huntingdonshire, ratifying and sealing the deed with his own hand. Thus was Robin Hood at last done justice to, and restored to his right as Earl of Huntingdon.

When all this matter was arranged, he sought his men, and detailed it to them, making them the offer to return to their homes, or to enroll themselves as a troop under his command. They preferred the latter, and there was not one in the band who made the least indication of a desire to quit him. There was great rejoicing among them; and no one felt more proudly happy than did Marian; not for the idea of being the Countess of Huntingdon, for she scorned the mere distinction of title, but she was delighted that he whom she loved and honored with such devotion, should, as he possessed all the attributes of a lofty, noble nature, thus become an Earl of England — his right, by birth and native qualities.

There was thus made a great change in the state of the band of Merrie Men. They were no longer to levy contributions upon churchmen and wealthy Normans, but to be clothed and fed from the revenue of their gallant and now noble leader, Robin Hood, Earl of Huntingdon. After they had agreed to follow him he made them swear never to disclose the situation of the haunt, for he said a time might come when they would again be glad of its services. The times were unsettled, and there was no telling what might occur. It was therefore much the wiser plan to keep its situation concealed from every one, that in case of emergency, they might fly to its sanctuary, should any unfortunate circumstance arise to compel them to do so.

The men cheerfully complied with his wishes. They saw the full force of what he uttered, and they were so used to place their judgment in his keeping, that they believed, whatever he said or did, it was right.

Everything was arranged to quit the bonnie old green wood, where they had spent so many happy hours, for a time — most probably forever. Robin Hood could not but feel regret at parting from a spot which had

ever held out its green arms to receive and shelter him at all times and under all circumstances. Such was the effect of this feeling, that he resolved he would not quit it until every affair which related to his full and entire possession of the Earldom was completely and fully arranged.

And thus, while the king stayed at Nottingham he attended on him, aided him in council — for Richard easily discovered Robin to possess great natural penetration, good judgment, and a quick decision, qualities which were almost, under existing circumstances, invaluable to him.

And he freely called upon them, being invariably gratified by the prompt and talented return with which the call was answered. He was fond, passionately fond, of hunting and when he went into the forest, Robin Hood was ever with him, pointing out the best spots to follow his favorite pastime, and getting his men to turn out a magnificent buck, which always afforded splendid sport, much to Richard's enjoyment.

On the 30th of March 1194 Richard held a great council at Nottingham, and among the many things discussed, Robin Hood's right to the Earldom of Huntingdon, was one. The king's wishes were readily met by the councilors, and prepared by them to be put in force.

Richard now prepared to return to London, where he was to be re-crowned, to set aside all the effects his long captivity might have had upon the people — a ceremony to which he had a very strong objection, but was overruled, because it was deemed politic, and therefore, he departed with his train for London, leaving Robin Hood still a tenant of the green wood.



Chapter 10

*Yet thee to leave is death, is death indeed.
Clasp me a little longer on the brink
Of fate! While I can feel thy dear caress;
And when this heart hath ceased to beat – Oh!
Think - And let it mitigate thy woe's excess –
That thou hast been to me all tenderness.
And friend to more than human friendship just,
O! by that retrospect of happiness,
And by the hopes of an immortal trust,
God shall assuage thy pangs
When I am laid in dust!*

----- Campbell

*Lay me, then, gently in my narrow dwelling –
Thou gentle heart;
And though thy bosom should with grief be swelling,
Let no tear start;
It were in vain –*

----- Motherwell

*Touch'd by the music and the melting scene,
Was scarce one tearless eye amidst the crowd.
Stern warriors, resting on their swords, were seen
To veil their eyes.*

* * *

*Then mournfully the parting bugle bid
Its farewell, o'er the grave of –*

----- Campbell

It was perhaps a fortunate resolve which determined Robin Hood to remain in his old dwelling place, until all things had been laid in a train to insure him and his men a safe abode in Huntingdon Castle. Inasmuch that when Richard arrived in London, he was so plunged into affairs of all descriptions, that he had not an opportunity of scarce even inquiring whether his mandate had been fulfilled, and our hero placed in the halls of his forefathers.

His coronation, which took place at Winchester, soon after he had quitted Nottingham, necessarily involved much of his time, and but a very short period subsequent to that, he quitted England, at the head of a body of troops, to revenge himself upon Philip of France for the injuries he had inflicted upon him while away from England.

The Baron of Broughton, who still retained Huntingdon Castle, as well as the title, possessed likewise of enormous revenues, independent of those which the estates pertaining to the title produced, exerted the whole of his influence, backed by no mean disbursement of wealth, to evade Richard's decree, and retain the Earldom. 'Possession is nine points of the law,' says the adage, and the crafty Abbot of Ramsey tried hard to make it ten. He did not attempt open opposition to the will of Richard, but he craved time to enable him to retire to his other estates and during that time he employed every means to gain the Chancellor to his side, by making him presents of great value, and offering his assistance in any way, should it be required.

And by these means the decree of Richard was evaded, and Robin in his green wood home waited patiently the tidings which should tell him impediments no longer existed to his assuming his title, and transferring his home from a forest to a castle, until long after Richard had left England. But there seemed no evidence whatever of his being nearer to the restoration of his rights than he was before he met with the Lion Heart, who was, at the expiration of a year after he had given Robin the deed of restoration, still in Normandy.

Once Robin Hood urged his claims to Hubert Walter, whom the king had advanced from the Bishopric of Salisbury to the Archbishopric of Canterbury, and had appointed him Guardian of England and Grand Justiciary. His claims, though not treated with contumely, met with the greatest indifference. He speedily found that opposition against so wealthy a churchman, and so influential a noble as the Abbot of Ramsey and Baron of Broughton, who in one person united those titles, in addition to the Earldom of Huntingdon, was vain and futile; so, after a slight mental struggle, which the hopes of being looked upon by his fellow countrymen as a noble without taint had created, he wisely determined to give up all thoughts of it, and live in the green wood in the old manner, and, if possible, with equal happiness.

He summoned his people together, and told them this. He concluded by saying that, taking everything into consideration, it was, perhaps, for the best, because they had been as a little community which was completely, as it were, isolated in society. They had lived together without mixing with any but those of the band, and did they go once more into society, they would, probably, frequently have reflections cast upon their former mode of life.

They would be disunited, and compelled to be subservient to laws and customs which a habit of living freely and simply in the green wood would render highly distasteful and oppressive. They had for years looked up to him, as a large family would look up to a loved and honoured head of the house, they had been accustomed to his sway and ever cheerfully

obeyed its dictates, they had been very happy as they had lived, and they might almost insure, if they still followed the same mode of life, that they would still receive the same amount of happiness which they had hitherto experienced, and, therefore, they would live on in the old way, nor change their acts and manners in any one way but where they might be improved.

There was still the same shelter — still the green leaves and flowers to dwell among — and he believed that, after cool consideration, he should lay his head down with calmer contentment, and sleep more lightly, than he should have done had he made the change in his condition which he had expected.

His discourse, had a great effect upon his followers. He spoke to them in the terms and endearing manner of a loving brother. His language was of the most earnest and affectionate nature, and there was not one who stood around him, beneath the old trysting tree, but what could read in the deep, rich, trembling tones of his voice, that in all his thoughts and wishes his heart was with them, his old companions.

How highly, how fondly they appreciated it, was evident in their clasping hands, and swearing by our Dear Lady, upon the hilt of their swords, to live and die with him, and be true and constant as they had ever been. They were glad in their hearts that they had not quit the wood, for associations had rendered it so dear to them, that it would have been the same pain to them to quit it as it would have been for a band of patriots, unjustly exiled, to quit their native land.

In all things the band resumed their usual occupations and Robin Hood sent a notice to Hubert Walter, that as his claim, sanctioned by the King of England, had been treated with the most marked difference, and as there was every disposition to retain the present holder of the titles and estates in his usurpation, he should, in conjunction with his merrie men, act as they had hitherto done, ere they had rendered the king unasked an important service.

The Grand Justiciary took no notice of the document — as if he had never received it, but Robin Hood found that during Richard's lifetime, although Hubert Walter exercised the most vigorous measures for the restoration of tranquility throughout England, hunting and scattering in all directions through the kingdom such bands of men who had lawlessly congregated together, save and except those in Sherwood, and they were left unmolested.

Four years passed away, and they lived as they had hitherto done, with the same amount of cheerfulness and pleasant mirth as ever, and then it became known in England that Richard of the Lion Heart was dead. The effect upon the people of England was tremendous. Prince John had succeeded in obtaining for himself the most decided hatred of the nation

before he quitted it, and no sooner was it known that he would have the crown, than it seemed the signal for violence and outrage all over the kingdom.

The nobles and barons drew in their vassals, filling their castles with armed men and provisions, while the peasantry and poorer classes committed violence and devastation to a frightful extent. Nothing but the greatest vigilance on the part of the Primate and those connected with him could have prevented the kingdom becoming one terrible scene of carnage and anarchy.

It was about two or three years after John's accession, that he returned to England from Rouen for succours, after having expended an enormous amount of human life and treasure in a useless war, prosecuted while he was wasting his time in luxury and dissipation at Rouen, that the Abbot of Ramsey passed in great state through Sherwood Forest on his way to York. He was attacked by Robin Hood and his men, made prisoner, and treated to a repast of the most scanty nature, and then made to pay for it, not only with all the property he had with him, but also a very large sum of money which he gave a written order for, and for which Robin dispatched two of his men while the abbot was yet in his custody. When the men returned with the treasure, the abbot was liberated, and the first use he made of his freedom was to acquaint the king with the outrage upon his sacred person and upon his property.

John, who had need of every noble or wealthy person for a friend at this time, turned an attentive ear to what the abbot stated, and sent an hundred men cased in steel, and commanded by Sir William de Gray, brother to John de Gray, his favorite minister, to rout Robin from the forest, and cut him and his people to pieces without quarter or mercy.

The knight, who was a Norman, his band also being all of that country, vowed he would lay Robin Hood's head at the abbot's feet, and departed upon his errand with the firm purpose of putting his threat into execution. His men were armed only with long swords, and fully expected to obtain a victory with the greatest ease, but when they were in Nottingham they were taught to expect a different issue. They, however, laughed to scorn all they heard; and marched with the greatest confidence to the green wood.

Robin Hood, who knew of their arrival in Nottingham, of their intention and equipments, prepared in a certain part of the wood to meet them. One of his people, disguised as a peasant, offered to guide the Norman troop to Robin's haunt, and his services were accepted.

After leading them several miles through almost one entire entanglement of briar, bush, brake, and covert, and fatiguing them, being encased in armor, excessively, they at length arrived at a glade studded in

all parts with tall beech and elm trees, and there were posted Robin Hood and his men. The Normans gave a great shout as their eyes lighted upon their enemy and the merrie men responded by a loud insulting laugh of derision.

This inflamed the Normans in a very high degree, and they rushed on to the attack with all the impetuosity their fatigued limbs would enable them. To their surprise, the merrie men opposed them with nothing but quarter staffs, and with such agility, that the troop found their swords of little use, for they could not exercise an activity at all competent to cope with that displayed by their adversaries.

The heavy quarter staffs rattled with such vigor upon their casques and breastplates that they grew utterly confused; and when some of the men threw away their helmets to enable them to act with greater freedom, they were so beaten about the head that they fell senseless to the ground.

Sir William de Gray, who directed the movements of his men, grew enraged beyond description at the drubbing his men were receiving, and perceived at the same time that, encased with such a heavy weight of metal, they had not sufficient power to act, heartily cursed him who had advised him to go thus equipped and thought it prudent to draw off his men, and retreat upon Nottingham, with the intention of returning on the morrow in a very different guise, and then either conquering or perish in the field.

He accordingly blew a blast of his horn, and summoned his men to retreat, which they did in tolerable good order, Robin not suffering his men to pursue them, save a few scouts, who followed them for the purpose of ascertaining that they really did quit the forest. When that was ascertained, he returned with his followers to the trysting tree, and there enjoyed a good repast after his morning's exertion.

Robin anticipated that Sir William de Gray had not yet done with him, and the arrival of one of the men who had been sent to learn their movements, with intelligence of their intended attack on the morrow proved he was right. On the morrow they came clad in the light dresses of archers — they were good bowmen, and this time they were armed with bows and spears, and a lighter species of sword and buckler.

Robin determined to meet him in the same spirit, and to read, through him, a lesson to others who might attempt to dislodge him. He drew up his men in the same place as he had the preceding day, and waited their coming.

Time passed on, however they came not. Robin began to think they had altered their mind, when one of his people arrived, stating that the troop were in the wood — were on their way to attack him — and, by a singular circumstance, had missed their road, and stumbled upon the direct track to the trysting tree, where all the females were assembled, waiting the issue of the conflict.

Not an instant was to be lost. The men broke up their position, and at the top of their speed proceeded to check the further advance of the Normans. They had some distance to pass over, and notwithstanding their efforts, the Normans succeeded in getting close up to the glade, in the center of which stood the trysting tree. There they saw the females assembled, and with the ruthless barbarity of the time, Sir William, feeling satisfied he should inflict a bitter sting upon the outlaws, and gratify revenge for his previous defeat, seeing them unprotected, resolved to suffer his men to violate them first, and butcher them afterwards.

But the women, on seeing them, set up a shriek, and retreated with precipitancy. He noticed that many of them followed the directions of one who appeared a superior among them, and prevented a continuance of the heedless confusion into which they were at first thrown, and who was now with rapid steps leading the females away. He raised his bow, and taking a deliberate aim, fired. He was a good marksman — his arrow struck his victim, and she fell bleeding to the ground.

A shriek of woe filled the air, and she was borne by the maidens swiftly away.

There was one who saw her danger, who observed Sir William take his aim, and came bounding along in a series of frantic leaps, to throw himself within range of the arrow. He had his own bow bent, and fixed, he thought, in sufficient time to prevent the discharge of Sir William's arrow, but he was too late.

The knight's arrow quitted his bow at the same moment Robin Hood's left his — for it was he who witnessed and strove to prevent Sir William's barbarous act.

Each sped to its course: Marian fell, mortally wounded; and Sir William, with a quivering shriek, leaped five feet in the air, and fell dead with an arrow through his heart.

Robin Hood knew it was Marian that fell, and was in a state of frenzy. Little John also knew that she had fallen, and to the men he communicated it, to animate them to revenge. Every man in the band had loved her, as though she had been a dearly prized sister, and yet a queen. Her gentleness, her uniform sweetness, kindliness, and tender consideration had won their esteem and love to the furthest extent human nature allowed them.

When they knew she had fallen by the cool and deliberate act of the leader of the men opposed to them, they uttered a short fierce shout, which, in its tone, told a terrible tale, and then they rushed on to the attack with a stern silence, which, in all their actions, they had never before exhibited.

But they resolved that her memory should receive an oblation which should not easily be forgotten. They went to work like tigers, with a fury and deadly success that was frightful to behold.

Little John's exertions were terrific. With a huge sword — for, independent of the unfortunate event just related, they had expected the encounter to be a fierce one — he cut down everyone who confronted him; every blow carried certain death with it. He slew and spared not and stalked on, mowing down men as if they were briars in his path.

Robin Hood, too, fought with a fierce and desperate resolution: his brows were upon his eyelids, and his eyeballs were as round as marbles, while his teeth were clenched, his lips set firm, and his face pale to deathliness. His arm seem nerved with a giant's strength. All who came within his reach, and stood up before him, met their death.

He seemed unconscious of all things but the deadly task he was pursuing with such tremendous success. Unwounded, he fought in the thickest of the fight, his sword flew in all directions, inflicting utter destruction upon whomsoever it alighted. And as he cut down each opposer, he changed not, save to set his teeth still firmer, for, with all this horror around him, he had a thronging sense of the agony which was awaiting him in the glade.

Soon it grew understood there was no quarter given or taken, and each man fought actuated by the knowledge he was fighting for his life, and a resolve to sell it dearly. The conflict was of the most sanguinary nature. Fierce oaths and execrations mingled with the groans of the dead and dying.

The Normans fell in numbers, man after man was cut down, wounded to the death — while the merrie men seemed to bear a charmed life. But they were all expert swordsmen, powerful men, and frenzied by a burning desire of revenge, and a deadly hatred of the Norman race. Their hands grasped their weapons firmer, and their arms seemed nerved with an additional strength in being opposed to them.

For two hours fought they in this way and, at length, a mere handful of Normans were left, and then they threw down their arms and fled, the merrie men pursuing them, cutting them down as they overtook them. Out of the hundred men who that morning had marched blithely from Nottingham, three only returned to relate the events of the fatal and bloody conflict.

When the conflict was ended by the flight of the Normans, Robin threw his sword from him and flew to the glade where he had seen Marian carried, and there he saw her laying extended upon the ground, and Maude, in a torrent of tears which blinded her, making ineffectual efforts to stanch the blood which was flowing from her side.

Robin threw himself by her side, his heart bursting with anguish, his tongue clove to the roof of his month, he felt choking and unable to articulate a word. At his approach, Marian opened her eyes and turned them upon him; she recognized him instantly and scanned him hastily.

"Are you unhurt, dear Robin?" she articulated, in a feeble voice.

"I am, I am," he uttered hoarsely, trying to force the words out.

"The Holy Mother be praised!" she exclaimed, a faint smile illumining her feature. "I have prayed earnestly that you might, and the Blessed Virgin has heard my prayers. And has that terrible battle ceased, dear Robin?"

"It has, Marian. We have driven them from the wood. But, dear Marian, you – I – Holy Mother of God! I cannot endure this sight!" burst forth Robin, with agony, and buried his face in his hands.

"Nay, Robin, dear Robin, look up," faintly uttered Marian, trying to speak cheerfully; "I am not much hurt, indeed I am not. See, the arrow is out, it is only a flesh wound. You know, dear Robin, if the wound were mortal, I should have died when I drew it forth, and I am smiling on thee. Look upon me, dear Robin." and she reached forward her hand to touch him. He raised his head at her words, and found that the exertion had caused her to faint away.

But her words had raised hopes in him. He saw it was as she had said, and he believed fondly that she still might be spared to him. He therefore, prepared to stanch the blood by means in use among them, and which had ever proved effectual.

With the aid of Maude, part of her dress was removed, the wound bathed, some bruised herbs applied, and then it was carefully bandaged. As the exertion of removing her might have a fatal effect upon her, a couch was brought, a large tent of leaves erected over her, and she was carefully watched until she came to her senses. After a little while, she seemed better, and expressed a desire to sleep, and soon she fell into a deep slumber.

Robin then went to see the condition of his men. He found Little John actively employed with Much and Will Scarlet in binding up the wounds of those who had been maimed in the fray, and directing the burial of all who had fallen. He had the satisfaction of discovering that not one of his men was killed, and but seven badly wounded. The wounds of the remainder were of no moment, while the slaughter of the Normans was awful.

A deep pit was dug far from the scene of action, and their bodies were thrown in it. When this was completed, Robin returned to Marian, and sat by her side until she awoke.

When she had shaken the effects of her deep sleep from her eyelids, she turned her full dark eyes upon him, and smiled as she told him she felt no pain, and she was sure she should soon be better.

She said this more because she knew he would be happier to hear it than from any inward conviction she felt that such was the case. But she wished only to see him cheerful, whatever might be her own feelings, and she knew the nearer he deemed her recovery proportionally would his cheerfulness increase.

For some days she continued thus, but at length a change took place for the worse. Inflammation ensued, and all hopes of her recovery fled. Robin scarce ever quitted her side.

At length, on the evening of the day succeeding inflammation commencing, she awoke from a deep sleep into which she had fallen, and her eyes lighted on Robin, who was kneeling by her side, and with his hands upraised was praying in passionate earnestness, while the big scalding tears were coursing each other down his pale cheeks. His words had no sound, but she could tell by the quivering emotion of his lip how enthusiastically fervent were the prayers he breathed.

She awaited silently until he had concluded; then she called in a faint quiet tone to him — “Dear Robin,” she exclaimed, “My beloved husband, my first, dearest, and last love! The time has come when we must part. I feel the hand of death upon me, and I know that my time here with thee, thou dearly loved, is but brief.”

“Before we part I would tell thee, with my expiring words, with what felicity I have dwelled with thee ever since we were united. I would tell thee how in my heart of hearts I have cherished the daily, hourly exhibition of thy love for me, how I have felt in all things it has known no change, Never, never!”

“I would tell thee, Robin, how happy, how very happy thou hast made me, and in the fullness of my heart would wish most earnestly I could coin my thankfulness into some visible shape, that you might see how I have appreciated thy love. That I have loved thee with the entire worship of a heart wholly engrossed by thee, the Holy Mother be my judge. I have tried to show thee as much, indeed I have, and if my acts have been inadequate to my wishes, it has arisen wholly from inability to express that which was so deeply engraven upon my heart. I have striven to discharge the duties of one who loved thee, and of a wife —”

“And have done so, dear Marian — have more than done so,” interrupted Robin, trying hard to speak, without betraying the anguish his spirit was crushed beneath.

“And should have done so, dearest Robin,” she continued, faintly smiling, “Had it pleased Heaven that we should have lived on together until we laid down our lives, good old folk, however, such is not ordained, and I shall pass away from you happier, as I think you have appreciated my love to the extent it existed. Place your arm round me, dear Robin —”

so, and let me lay my head upon your shoulder. There, now I can breathe my last words into your ear, and my spirit will pass lightly and happily away, for I shall utter my last sigh upon thy breast.”

“Beloved Marian, talk not so,” cried Robin, in a voice of the keenest misery, “I cannot bear to hear thee speak of parting forever. Holy Mother of God, it is too much! Oh, dear Lady of Heaven, if thou didst ever hear me, and serve me at my prayers, hear me now; spare her to me, spare her, or I am miserable forever — forever!”

“’Tis a vain wish, dear Robin,” uttered Marian, gently pressing his hand with her hot parched fingers, we must at some time part. It is bitter, God knows it is bitter to part, but it is the will of Him who ordains all things, and we should not repine or seek to change what He ordaineth. Think, dear Robin, that we shall meet again, Oh! Yes, we shall again meet among trees and flowers, and sweet shining faces, and all fair things, and never part again, never! **Never!** A place where there is nought but sunshine, and nothing to alter the sweet nature of the beauty around.”

“Just ere I awoke, Robin, I had a dream. I thought you and your people were all in the pleasant old wood, and you smiled and made merry, and the sun shone on the green leaves, and the blossoms and buds were in their brightest colors, and the trees were all garlanded, as on the happy, happy day that saw us united, dear love. And I thought, amid all this joy and delight, I was suddenly led away, and I seemed to be taken to some drear, dark place.”

“I had no power to prevent being taken — I looked on you, and the smile I saw before still played on your features. The people appeared to grow gayer yet, and it seemed as if I was about to leave it all forever, never again to look upon what I then beheld.”

“In my anguish, I covered my eyes with my hand and wept. While still in tears, a light hand was placed upon my shoulder. I turned my face to see who had touched me, and looked upon the placid, sweet features of my dear mother.”

“‘Weep not, my dear child.’ she exclaimed, ‘Weep not, thou’rt passing the ordeal we must all endure. Thou hast but quitted a pleasant, yet a fleeting scene of happiness, for one which is eternal—behold!’”

“I looked, and suddenly I found myself in a garden of surpassing beauty, the loveliest faces with the sweetest expression of mildness and purity were beaming round me, the air was fragrant with the scent of the most delightful flowers and the trees were so green and so fresh, and the birds warbled so beautifully, and the air was so cool, that I have no words to describe them. And, oh! dear Robin, what far exceeded all, I saw thee hastening towards me, looking upon me with loving eyes, and a face so happy that, with a cry of delight, I sprang towards thee, and my mother’s soft voice sounded in my ears, saying, ‘*and this endureth forever.*’ At that moment I awoke, and I knew that my hour was come.”

"I feel that I am dying. I can feel myself each moment growing weaker and weaker. But, dear Robin, my head is pillowed on thy breast, thine eyes, which have always turned upon me with the soft endearing expression of affection, are looking on me, if sadly, yet lovingly, thy arm is round me, and like a weary child upon its mother's bosom, I feel as if falling into a gentle slumber. My voice grows fainter, I can hear, and my sight is dimmer, for I cannot see thine eyes so plainly as before. Kiss me, Robin."

He pressed his burning lips to hers, and she felt his hot tears raining on her face. She lifted her feeble hand, and with her finger traced the spot where a tear had fallen, and pressed it to her lips — her voice became a whisper, and now her lips almost touched his ear. Again she spoke —

"Robin, my best beloved, when I am away from thee, when thou hast only the memory of her who loved thee to live in thy heart, let not thy sad thoughts make each hour one of weariness and wretchedness. Believe that I am happy, that my spirit is hovering round thy spirit, as it will, if it be permitted, and that it will receive pleasure when it sees thee smile and look cheerful."

"For the sake of those around thee, who so much honour and love thee, as I have most proudly seen and known, who look up to thee in all things, and take the tone of their actions from thy looks and temperament, and would be sad wert thou sad, even to the extent of thy sorrow, and for my sake, for thy Marian's sake, to lighten this dread hour of parting, turn not thy face from thy people, but be pleasant and cheerful, and happy, as before. Promise me this, dear, dear Robin, and I shall die so happy."

"I will — I will strive — I — God help me! I know not what I shall do," sobbed Robin, weeping like a child.

"Bless you, Robin. May the Almighty bless thee, my beloved, and I have now one last request — you will grant it me, I know, sweet love. I would I could see thee smile, but all is dark around me, and I hear my mother's gentle voice summoning me away. I come — I —"

"Robin, hour after hour have we sat beneath yon trysting tree, long before cruel men made thee a tenant in the wood. We were young hearts then, dear Robin, and sat beneath that tree, with its trembling leaves quivering over us, and the sweet delicate flowers waving round us, gazing upon each other with deep love, and thoughts which had no tongue, and hearts that throbbed and panted till we felt faint."

"One night, when the moon shone clearly over every leaf and flower, and there was no cloud to shade for an instant its gentle light, we wandered through the wood. It was before you told me that you loved me, yet I knew that you did, yet feared and doubted. We seated ourselves beneath that tree, and you said kind words soft and low, and I felt a sweet languor steal over my senses. I thought it would be pleasant to weep, I knew not why."

"My head sunk upon your shoulder, the bright moonlight showed clearly all the beautiful things growing and waving silently around us, and then I thought how sweet it would be to be buried there among those flowers. Ever since we have dwelt in this wood I have cherished that hope, treasured it up, and now I would, dear Robin, be laid in that spot, for thou wilt be ever near me, and the flowers will not bloom less brightly, nor the grass be less green and fresh because it is waving over the head of one who loved to look upon their tender beauty while living. I — let me hear thee say, Robin, I shall be laid there."

"You shall, dearest Marian, you shall, my sweet angel. And when my time shall come — God grant it may be soon! — if there is one true heart near me to do my last bidding, I will lay beside thee, and the green turf shall wave over us both, dear Marian, in death, as it did beneath us in life."

"Bless thee! Bless thee! with my last breath I pray for thee, with my last words I bless thee. Farewell — let thy lips receive my last sigh, my beloved Robin; smile upon me, — I cannot see thee, but I shall know if thou dost. I die happy — happy — I come — I — Robin, bless thee — dearest — bless —"

The words, which were barely beyond a whisper, ceased. Robin felt his lips receive a faint kiss as a low sigh left Marian's, his hand a gentle pressure, and then all was motionless. For a long time he remained in the same position, scarce daring to breathe. Then someone entered the tent. He looked up wildly— it was Maude. He turned his eyes rapidly upon Marian's face, and then suddenly depositing his slight burden upon the couch, he sprung up with convulsively clenched hands, with a frantic madness in his eyes, and shrieked forth, falling senseless to the ground as he uttered the words —

"Holy Mother of God! She is gone forever! My best beloved — my wife!"



"MARIAN IS DEAD!"



Chapter 11

*Now, quoth Robin Hood, Ile to Scarborough go,
It seems to be a very faire day;
He took up his inne at a widow woman's house,
Hard by upon the waters grey.
Master, tye me to the mast, said he,
That at my mark I may stand fair;
And give me my bent bow in my hand,
And never a Frenchman will I spare.
Then streight they boarded the French ship,
They lyeng all dead in their sight.
They found within that ship of warre,
Twelve thousand pound of money bright.
----- Robin Hood's Preferment*

*She blooded him in the vein of the arm,
And locked him up in the room;
There did he bleed the live-long day,
Until the next day at noon.
Lay me a green sod under my head,
And another at my feet;
And lay my bent bow by my side,
Which was my music sweet;
And make my grave of gravel and green,
Which is most right and meet.
Let me have length and breadth enough,
With a green sod under my head;
That they may say, when I am dead,
Here lies bold Robin Hood!
----- Robin Hood's Death and Burial*

*Upon an ivied stone
Reclined his languid head; his limbs did rest,
Diffused and motionless, on the smooth brink
Of that obscurest chasm — and thus he lay,
Surrendering to their final impulses
The hovering powers of life.*

----- Shelley

Heart-sore to an extent he did not believe human nature could be carried, Robin Hood complied with Marian's last wish. A deep grave was dug beneath the trysting tree, her gentle form was laid in it; and then all the maidens strewed flowers over her body in such profusion, the cold damp earth could not touch it when they filled the grave up.

The body was followed by every member of the band, and every female connected with it. Her brother and Christabel shed sincere and heartfelt tears for her loss; and the stern and rough natures who stood round witnessing the last ceremonies performed to one they had revered and esteemed so much, were melted; and it was an affecting sight to see men, who never weep, stand like a band of sobbing children, as they caught the last glimpse of her they should never see again on earth.

Robin Hood stood and looked upon all that was done; took his last look of all that had made life worth living for, without shedding a tear.

His was a grief *too deep for tears*.

And when the grave was filled up, and flowers placed over it, his men turned their eyes upon him to see a statue: had he been of marble he could not have stood more motionless.

He stood thus for some time. When Maude approached him, and laid her hand upon his shoulder, he started as if he had been struck by an arrow, looked hastily and confusedly around him, and then struck his clenched fist against his forehead, exclaiming —

“Oh, God! it is all true!” He waved his hand to prevent anyone speaking to or approaching him, and turning away with his face upon his breast, he wandered among the solitary recesses of the wood to wrestle with his great grief alone.

Time, which soothes and softens the greatest miseries and griefs, had little influence upon Robin Hood, and ameliorated but slightly the intense anguish he suffered in losing the being who had made the old wood an earthly paradise to him.

For a long time he wandered through the solitary glades and unfrequented alleys with which the wood abounded, alone, completely absorbed in mad thoughts of the gentle spirit who had quitted him forever. And as occasionally he struck into glades, and sweet, cool, shady places, where he and his beloved Marian had so often strolled, wrapped in calm converse, which in every thought and word was invested with gentle affectionateness, the memory of those times would run through his brain, making him feel his loss with tenfold pain.

The wood grew distasteful to him. He retired to Barnsdale; and when there, mournful recollections crowded upon him more thickly than ever. He became, in person and in spirit, the shadow of what he had been. As Marian had predicted, the band became infected by his sadness, and no longer was heard the jocund, careless laugh of light, unsophisticated mirth, ringing bonnily among the branches and leaves of the forest trees, and finding a mirthful echo from all the hollow places round.

Little John dreaded the consequences of this dullness, this spiritless feeling among them, and the ravages it was evidently making on Robin's frame and health and he therefore set to work and remonstrated with him kindly, but firmly, and persuaded him for some short time to leave the wood entirely, and when he was ready to return to Sherwood or Barnsdale again, he would find himself a better and a happier man.

Little John's arguments, though not polished, still were uttered with a native delicacy, which carried great weight with them; it was an eloquence whose base was the best and kindest motive, and Robin yielded to its reasoning as much for the motive which induced it, as for the necessity he awoke to of throwing off this sad-coloured garment of grief.

The more effectually he thought to create a change, he determined to make a short sea voyage, an idea which met with a hearty concurrence from Little John; When this was all resolved, Robin assembled his men under the tree, and communicated his intention to them, with annotations by Little John, whenever he thought it necessary to make them, in order to strengthen the necessity for Robin's absence. The men cheerfully acquiesced in his determination, and promised in all things to obey Little John in his absence, as if he were Robin himself; and Little John vowed he would try hard to be to them all Robin had ever been to them.

Our hero took an affectionate farewell of them, and wended his way to Scarborough. Previous to his departure, he changed his dress for the apparel of simple peasant, and when he arrived at Scarborough, he stopped at a cottage kept by an old woman, the widow of a fisherman. During a slight repast he took there, he ascertained that the old woman still kept the fishing boat which belonged to her husband. It was manned by three men, who were scarce adequate to the duty required, as the vessel was a large size, and the widow said she could not afford to keep and pay a fourth.

On the impulse of the moment Robin offered his services, and the old woman instantly and gladly accepted them, and a bargain was struck between them. He gave his name as Simon of the Lee, and was in due time installed in his new situation on board the fishing vessel. But his utter ignorance of everything connected with the rigging or working of a vessel rendered him of little service to his companions; and when out at sea, he could only be employed by the men in the meanest offices, frequently being greeted with a coarse laugh as he each minute displayed his utter inexperience.

One great cause of laughter was his having brought his bow, and a sheaf crammed with arrows, on board with him, the men telling him that he must get ready to shoot the fish, and save them the trouble of using the net. He bore all their taunts with the greatest good nature, and being very willing to do all he was told as well as he could, the men, albeit they

joked him so, took a great liking to him. Robin, however, was out of his element; he was looked upon as a quiet, harmless fellow, but as a foolish know-nothing, and his pride was thereby wounded. He soon began to wish himself back in the green wood again.

"If I had these fellows in Plompton park," he thought, "they would not be so ready to laugh at me for a fool; but each man to his craft. My men, had they these fellows shooting with them, would laugh them to scorn, as they now do me."

The fishermen made a very successful haul of fish, and with their boat loaded to the gunwale, hoisted their sails and made for home. Upon their way they perceived a French sloop of war of small build bearing towards them, manned only by a few hands, but no sooner did the master of the fishing vessel behold her, than he cried out "all was lost."

"Why?" asked Robin Hood.

"Why, thou foolish varlet, they will bear down upon us, board us, take no prisoners, and thrust us under hatches in some filthy dangerous dungeon in France."

"But you will fight with them first," said Robin, "You will not let these take you without striking a blow?"

"It is of no use," said the master bitterly, "they outnumber us, and would soon cut us to pieces."

"I do not think they would cut us to pieces so easily," queried Robin.

"Faugh!" cried the master, scornfully, "You – you indeed! Why, if you were thrown overboard there's only a land lubber lost; but if one of us were to slip our wind, there would be as good a seaman gone as ever trod a plank on salt water."

"You hold me cheaply," replied Robin, almost inclined to be angry. "Give me but my bow and arrows, and you shall find I know somewhat more than you think I do," and running below, he fetched his bonnie yew bow and good arrows. Upon his return he said –

"Tie me to the mast that my aim may be steadier, and I will show you that if I am not expert at handling a rope, I am a bow string."

His request was complied with; he was affixed to the mast, and waited quietly for the French sloop to get within range. It was fortunately a calm, clear day, and there was very little heave in the sea, a circumstance which enabled him to take a surer aim.

As soon as the vessel neared them as he felt sufficiently, he took an aim at a fellow who was in the bow of the sloop, and although the distance appeared greater than the bow would carry, yet his arrow pierced the Frenchman's body, and he fell backwards lifeless; one who ran to his assistance also received the same fate, and the master and the men of Robin's vessel set up a shout; the master then pointed out the man at the helm of the sloop, and Robin brought him down.

The consequences were, that the sloop came up in the wind, and was soon unmanageable, although there was not enough wind to send the mast over the side; a Frenchman who ran to the helm to put the vessel's head right, and to supply the place of the steersman just killed, shared his fate, and fell dead.

The two vessels were now near each other, and there were only six men left in the sloop, — a number speedily reduced to four, and then to three; although as they neared, they returned Robin's fire smartly with crossbows, but with-out any avail, as his companions had rigged up a small bulwark upon the deck, and from its shelter assisted Robin with crossbows.

However, no sooner did they ascertain there was only three left, than they resolved to run the vessel aboard them; they had lashed the helm to keep the vessel to the wind when they got behind their bulwark, and now they released our hero, and put the vessel about and laid her aboard of the sloop, which was yawing about in the wind, having lost all command for want of steering. They boarded sword in hand, and the three Frenchmen threw down their arms and surrendered. It appeared that this sloop was conveying a large sum of money to meet some exigencies of Philip of France, to the amount of twelve thousand pounds sterling; and as they were not a long distance from their port of destination, they thought they might as well realize a little sum for themselves, by the capture of a fishing boat or so, and this was the result of their speculation.

The master and his companions were delight-ed beyond measure at their success; they were now inclined to worship where they before had scoffed, and with primitive generosity declared the prize wholly and solely to be Robin's — his intrepidity had gained the victory.

"If mine be the victory," said Robin, "thou shalt be the better for it; one half of the sloop and its contents I will give to the poor widow who owns this vessel, and the other half to thee and thy companions."

"No, no, good Simon," cried the master, "Your good nature shall not be imposed on thus; you have won the vessel with your good right hand — it is yours; do you be the owner, and we will serve and follow thee."

"I thank you much," replied Robin, "for your good feeling towards me, my honest friends, but it shall be as I have said; and the gold shall build ye all, and those who are poorer than ye, better houses in Scarborough Bay. I have said it, and nought will change me.

The men vowed he was a thorough-built good fellow, and when he landed were not slow in spreading the events of their voyage and his generosity. He was overwhelmed with the thanks of the people, and he stayed with them long enough to see his wishes partly carried into effect; and then, having had quite enough of the sea, and his heart yearning once more to be in the green wood with his merrie men, his foot aching to

be once more pressing the soft turf, he one morning summoned the fishermen together, and telling them he hoped that his little act would teach them to have bolder hearts, and never give up all hopes again when attacked, until the battle was irrecoverably lost; they saw what one man could do, and if they courageously united, they could conquer five times their number of French, or Normans, as they were better known by that name; and to strengthen his remarks, he gave the Normans a very doubtful character, and after more good advice, to which they listened with the most devout attention, he wound up by saying that in all probability he should never see them again, but he hoped that for many a day to come, they would have a good word and kind thought for Robin Hood.

Ere they could recover the surprise which his name created, for he had all along gone by the name of Simon of the Lee, he was out of sight. To this day the little bay where these events occurred bears the name of Robin Hood's Bay.

Robin was soon again in Barnsdale Forest; it was a beautiful morning as he entered its precincts, and he felt his heart lighten and his step spring as he found himself surrounded by trees and flowers and listening to the cheerful song of the birds.

He discharged a few arrows to try whether his powers were impaired by his journey, but found that he shot with as much truth as ever; a swift hart flew by him, and he brought it down as cleanly as he had done when in full practice; and then, to ascertain whether his men were in Barnsdale, he blew a lusty peal upon his bugle – the summoning signal.

For a moment it rung in the air, echoed by the hollow places, but presently a loud halloo sounded from a distance, and five minutes scarce elapsed ere there was a rattle of footsteps, a crashing of boughs, and suddenly out sprung Will Scarlet, and gazed for a moment on Robin, then clasped him in his arms, the next instant disengaging himself and tossing his cap high up in the air, performing a leap himself as if he intended to follow his cap and fetch it down; then again he seized Robin's hand and laughed, while the tears of pure joy run down his cheek; his voice was very husky when he essayed to speak his welcome, but his gladness was as clear as anything could be. In another minute the band were crowding round him, overjoyed to see him. Little John waited until the hubbub had subsided, and then grasped Robin's hand with a fervor that would have crushed the hand of any modern person, and welcomed him to the green wood again.

"Welcome! Welcome!" shouted the band, giving birth to stentorian hurrahs. A merry feast had they that day, every one seemed to vie with the other in giving birth to expressions of delight, and rendering his return as joyous as possible.

He entered into their feelings warmly, and though the scene raised remembrances of Marian, for the sake of the simple, earnest, and joyous hearts around him, he stifled the sadness that ever and anon would strive to steal over him, and received the warm greetings and welcomings in the spirit they wished him; and when night came, and they each separated to lay their heads down in gentle slumber, Robin remained beneath the trysting tree, and while the ground was strewn round him with sleeping men he knelt down and prayed for the repose and everlasting bliss of her whose pleasant face was no longer near him, whose kind voice should never again sound in his ear, whose tender touch should no more thrill with sweetness through him, and whose gentle spirit he felt was hovering around him where'er he went.

In the stillness of that clear night, when all were hushed in deep repose, he wept the last tears to her memory that he ever shed, resolving inwardly to keep her memory clear and bright in his soul, with a brilliancy nothing could sully, and to fulfill her wish of thinking she had gone to some brighter, better place, where she was far happier than she was with him, and to be cheerful and light of heart as if some great good had occurred to her, and to live on in the pleasant hopes that he should one day rejoin her. When he had finished he felt a sensation of calm joy pass over him, and he laid down beneath the tree to sleep; it came quickly, as if borne on the wings of zephyrs, chanting music soft and low. He dreamed a sweet dream of a reunion with his beloved, and when he awoke it was late in the morning, and Little John with Will Scarlet were seated near him watching his slumbers. He darted to his feet, and taking a hand of each in his own, exclaimed –

“Little John and Will, my dearest friends, from this day you will find me in all things Robin Hood.”

“Amen!” they both said, and returned his grasp with as much fervency as he gave it.

Time passed on.

Under King John's sovereignty the miseries of the people daily increased.

Robin to all far and near in the three counties, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, and Yorkshire, proved a terror where an unjust law of oppressive power was exercised. His feats, single-handed, and backed by his men, were the theme of conversation, and obtained a notoriety for him all over England.

Frequently were bands sent to crush him, but in vain; and after each encounter he proved more formidable than ever. He was devoted to his band, and his band to him.

Years passed away, and they still adhered to the primitive laws which, as they closely observed, had created so much happiness for them. There had been but few changes in the band, but such as they were it may please the reader, ere he shut the book, to know.

Sir Guy Gamwell died at a very advanced age, and was soon followed by his wife; upon this, the brothers returned to the hall, leaving the wood, as a dwelling place, forever. Maude had a little family growing up round her, and discovered that it was better to dwell with them in a hall than in a wood; and Will Scarlet, who could not exist away long from her, for he still loved her with the old affection, left his green wood life, and took up his abode with his wife, accompanied by Much and Barbara.

But Little John knew nothing, could see nothing, which could ever create a necessity for leaving Robin Hood while he lived; and therefore, hand in hand, heart to heart, like dear brothers, instead of leader and follower, did they dwell together. Little John's wife, Winifred, the gentle and amiable, had lost her life in giving birth to a child, which was brought up tenderly by Barbara; and save this, he was without a tie or cause to induce him to quit the wood; but had there been such he would never have done it — his love for Robin would have kept him by his side when all others had quitted him, and until one of them ceased to breathe.

These were the only changes which had been made of any note. For our old friend Tuck, for whom Robin had built a small chapel in Barnsdale, dedicated to the Holy Virgin, still considered himself as one of the merrie men, and was as roistering and fond of drinking as ever. Hal of the Keep had met with great preferment. While Richard of the Lion Heart was at Nottingham, Robin Hood had recommended Hal to his especial notice, and he had been made mareschal of the castle, a sort of governor, and had discharged his duties so well, that he was still retained during King John's reign in the office, and he held his trust true and faithfully. His wife, as she grew older, lost none of her beauties — at least so little, it was not missed, for she had such a quantity to spare; and her daughter, their only child, grew up the counterpart of her mother in loveliness and sweetness of temper.

Sir Richard of the Lee had lived quietly and happily with his wife, leaving the more active duties which the possession of the castle and estates involved, to his son Herbert, who made a figure among the Barons of England, when King John's tyranny induced them to revolt; and when the ever memorable Magna Charta was signed, Herbert, with the praise of brave and virtuous men, and the character of a brave and highly daring soldier, returned to his wife and home. Lilas proved a treasure to him; and both Sir Richard of the Lee and Herbert had reason to bless the day when the father gave to the son, and the son wedded the daughter, of a Saxon yeoman.

Robin Hood, whenever opportunity offered, became their honored guest, ever to their delight, and to his own peculiar gratification; and under all circumstances, at all times, Sir Richard never forgot the day when he first met with Robin Hood, while Herbert and Lilas taught their child to love him, and lisp his name in their prayers.

Soon after Magna Charta was signed, after a series of monstrous acts, King John wended his way to Nottingham, spreading devastation and horror everywhere. He was accompanied by a number of Generals, whose acts had obtained for them the names of

'Falco without Bowels,'
'Manleon the Bloody,'
'Walter Much, the Murderer,'
'Sottim, the Merciless,'
'Godeschal, the Iron hearted;'

they were the heads of foreign mercenaries. Their path was marked by blood and fire, death and extermination; a catalogue of the horrors they were committing flew before them, and as they approached the different villages the inhabitants fled in terror and horror.

Robin was not slow to learn all this, and he determined, that while near him, these foreign hordes, these merciless slayers, should be made to endure some of the sufferings they inflicted. The army approached Sherwood Forest, and a small advance guard came first, scouting. When the main body of the army came up, they found more than half the bodies of their comrades hanging from branches of the trees, and the remainder dead and dying upon the ground. They were astounded at the sight, but pushed on. Their numbers, however, would have made it mere madness for Robin to attempt to stay them, and his only plan was to harass them, and terribly did he perform this duty. Men fell, pierced by arrows, whilst almost in the centre of the army; stragglers were cut off and killed wherever they appeared, and as yet the enemy was unseen.

A panic was fast spreading through the army, dictated by superstition, for they began to believe they were in an enchanted wood. Sottim, the Merciless, however, determined to put a stop to it; and placing himself at the head of a body of fifty men, galloped into the recesses of the wood to turn out the unseen enemy; but he had not ridden a thousand yards ere he was shot dead, and not one of the troop returned to tell his fate.

The army entered Nottingham, and after committing great excesses there — a place which had declared itself favourable to them — they proceeded, led on by John, through the wood, to Yorkshire, burning and slaying wherever they came, as before.

It was known that Robin Hood was busy, and throngs of young men who had had wives, maidens they loved, and sisters, brutally defiled, fathers and brother. murdered, and property utterly destroyed, came out to join him; and all the way John went, Robin with his band was at his heels, cutting to pieces every straggling body of the army they encountered. One party they came up with, who had quitted the army, and were plundering and burning a small hamlet near Mansfield, subjecting the females to the most horrible treatment; in the middle of their monstrosities, Robin and his men were up with them, and cut them to pieces to a man; untiringly, after rendering such assistance as the shortness of the time would enable them, they were on John's track again, and repaying with terrible interest all his villainies. Fortunately, Allan-a-Dale's house, being in a deep dell, escaped them, as it was out of their route, and the castle of Sir Richard of the Lee as well; but whatever castle was taken, was given to some Norman adventurer, and instantly taken possession of.

But Robin Hood, whose band had been reinforced by the men of the three counties who had been sufferers through this terrible visitation, to the number of seven hundred men, who had sworn to be true to each other, and die sword in hand rather than surrender or give an inch of ground, as quickly stormed these castles and put these Normans to the sword; and harassing John's army beyond expression, for they had defied all efforts to capture them. The bands who had been sent out to cut them off, being always too small in number, were invariably repulsed with frightful loss.

John raged and stormed when he heard of it, but would not stop nor send a greater number to attack them, but pushed on after the young king of Scotland, who was retiring before him, vowing he "would unkennel the young fox."

John seems to have been actuated by the most fiendish impulses; he set the example of burning by setting fire to the house in which he had slept the night previous, and sanctioning the Normans to put his native subjects to the most horrible torture, to discover where they had placed their money. King John went as far as Edinburgh, and Robin Hood followed him as far as Northumberland — a terrible accompaniment to his march; his name got well known in the army, and whatever portion of it his men appeared among, were certain of being slain to a man.

Failing to gain his ends in Edinburgh, John returned to England, leaving, as before, a wide trail of blood; and as soon as he came within Robin's reach, our hero made the same tremendous reprisals upon him as he had previously done, never leaving him while he had a chance of retaliating upon the horrors he was inflicting; and to the Normans the

name of Robin Hood became a terror, as Hereward le Wake's had to their predecessors, when similar scenes were enacted in William the First's reign.

John quitted the north for Dover, and left commands for several bands of troops, stationed in various places, to follow and join him. Those which had to pass through Derby-shire, Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire, or Lincolnshire, were mostly intercepted, and but few escaped to tell that the Saxon Robin Hood had been among them. Soon after this, John died, and his son Henry came to the throne.

Robin had now reached his fifty-fifth year, and Little John his sixty-fifth, and yet both were as hale and strong as many who were their juniors twenty years; there was little necessity for them to pass such an active time as they had during King John's reign, because the Earl of Pembroke, who was guardian to King Henry III, disliking bloodshed, did much to ameliorate the condition of the people. Probably from inactivity, Robin Hood began to feel dull and listless; the sudden cessation of excitement produced a reaction on his spirits, and again he was ever at the grave of Marian, and then wandering alone in the most solitary part of the wood; a presentiment was upon him that his time was near at hand, and much as he strove to shake it off, it clung with the utmost tenacity to him. Little John who always tended him with the most affectionate earnestness, quickly perceived the melancholy change which had taken place, and applied himself at once to the task of arousing him from its influence; he traced it to its right source, and judged if a change was made in his system, that he would recover the healthful tone of spirits he had recently enjoyed.

Robin had more than ever excited the love of the people for him by his daring acts in their behalf, and could with safety traverse any part of the county of Nottingham alone.

An abbey which stood on the borders of the wood, called Kirkleys Abbey, had once received him when wounded in an attack upon a band of Normans; the prioress claimed a relationship, and tended him very carefully until he recovered. Little John now strenuously advised him to seek her and there be blooded, a remedy at that time for nearly all diseases of the frame or mind — and to gratify the strong desire Little John evinced, Robin complied with his wish; he sent word a day or so before, in order to prepare the prioress, and when he went there she received him with a smiling face and outstretched hands. She invited him to partake of some refreshment, which, however, he declined, and requested only that she would bleed him, a duty which she performed with much dexterity upon such members of the abbey as needed it, and he knew her skill, and had no hesitation in trusting her.

She showed him into a small upper room, which she had prepared for him, and he laid upon a couch while she opened a vein in his arm; she then took such an enormous quantity of blood from him, that he refused to permit her to take any more; and then she smiled as before, bound up his arm, and leaving him to repose, quitted the room, carefully locked the door after her, put the key in her pocket, and descended the stairs with the smile still upon her countenance.

This prioress, although devoted to God, had an unsaintly love for a certain knight, who was very frequent in his visits to the abbey; he learned from her that the celebrated Robin Hood, her kinsman, was coming to her to be blooded.

This knight was a brother of Sir Guy of Gisborne, a mean, dastardly, spiritless wretch; who, without the courage to meet our hero, worked upon this woman's fears, until he persuaded her to bleed Robin to death. The woman, of a weak mind, not possessing a spark of real virtue, suffered herself to be drawn into his views, and satisfied herself that she was doing a good act, in shortening the life of one who was an outlaw, and therefore a bad man; she had succeeded in drawing a great quantity of blood from her victim, but his resolution prevented at that time carrying her project into effect, but when darkness drew on, she stole cautiously to the chamber, and found our hero in a deep sleep; she quietly removed the bandage from his arm, and, having the satisfaction to see the wound break out afresh and the blood begin to trickle down his arm, she carried the bandage away with her, locked the door as before, and descended, leaving him there alone to die.

The morning broke, and as it began to pour its beams into the little chamber, Robin opened his eyes, but experienced such a dreadful sensation of faintness, that he could scarcely move. For a short time he lay still, and he began to think of his young days, of green trees and blue skies: then he exerted himself to try and shake off the faintness, and then he discovered he was deluged with blood, that the bandage was removed, and, from the loss of blood he had experienced, he was on the verge of death. His first impulse was to spring up and try the door, but he fell to the ground in the attempt: he, however, crawled to it and found it fast. He then dragged himself to the window, but found he had not strength for the leap, and, as a last resource, he put his horn to his mouth, and blew three weak blasts. His dear old friend Little John was near at hand, as he ever was when his services were needed. He heard the summons, feeble as it was, for he was hovering round the abbey walls.

His blood ran cold as he heard the faint tones, and in an instant he suspected something was wrong. He called together a party of the merrie men, rushed to the abbey, and demanded instant admittance. It was denied him, and his suspicions were confirmed.

He seized a large block of stone which lay near, which no two other men could have moved, and hurled it against the door. It dashed it open, and he rushed in. Again he heard the feeble notes of the horn. He followed the sound, flew up the stairs, and threw himself against the door of the room where Robin was confined, and burst it open, to see a sight which turned his heart cold. Robin, with scarce half an hour's life in him, was leaning against the casement; the couch was a mass of blood, which had trickled and dripped, and lay a pool upon the floor. He uttered a cry, which was almost a shriek, as he beheld this. He clenched his hands and ground his teeth.

"Who has done this?" he cried. "Robin Hood, dear master, who has done this? Tell me, for the love of Heaven!"

"It matters not, Little John, now — all is over with me. I have bled to death!" feebly uttered Robin.

"By foul means," cried Little John, hoarsely — "by foul means. Is it not so, Robin?"

"I cannot die with a lie on my tongue," moaned Hood. "It is"

"Dear, beloved leader," cried Little John, throwing himself upon his knees before his dying friend, "if thou had ever loved me — and I know thou hast — let me have my revenge for this. I pray you, by your love for the Holy Mother of God, to grant me this. I will raise this accursed place to the ground. Not one hated stone shall stand upon another — not one shall live to say I dwelt there. Grant me this, for our blessed Savior's sake, who died on the Holy Rood. I know you will."

"No, Little John, not if I had lost twenty lives," exclaimed Robin, in a weak tone. "From the earliest hour of my life I never did harm or hurt to womankind, nor ever suffered it where I could prevent it. The last act of my life shall not change in spirit to what was my first. No, let her conscience be her punishment; I will not harm her. Give me my bow, Little John, and one arrow — it will be my last shot, and where it falls in the green wood there would I lay me down and die." Little John, with a bursting heart, did as he requested.

"Raise me to my feet," he said; "I would fire my last arrow as I fired my first."

He drew the bow with a sudden exertion of strength — a convulsive effort of expiring nature — and it flew over the tree tops to a considerable distance.



Little John followed the arrow with his eyes until it fell, and then turned to Robin, who continued in scarce audible voice, "It is my last shot — the last time I ever draw bowstring. Farewell, my, bonnie yew bow and my trusty broad arrow! Bear me to the spot where it fell."

Little John took his bow and arrows, and bore him in his arms as if he had been an infant; and when the merrie men, who were congregated below, saw him, they uttered an exclamation of horror, and would at once have proceeded to violence, if Little John had not checked them and bade them follow him. They soon reached the spot where the arrow fell, and there Little John laid down his beloved friend, who was gently passing away with an expression on his features of utter stupefaction.

"Summon my merrie men," uttered Robin, faintly. "I would see around me my gallant hearts, who have truly and faithfully followed me for so many years — I would heave my last sigh in their presence, the brave souls!" Little John blew three loud blasts, which summoned every member of the band, who little thought they were hastening to look their last upon their noble leader. Among them came Will Scarlet, who, although he had quitted the band of merrie men and the green wood as an abiding place, yet had still as much of the old leaven in him that he was a frequent visitor to them; indeed, he divided his time between his family and his old companions, and at the present time happened to be on a visit to Sherwood. When he saw Robin laying upon the turf, supported in the arms of Little John, he uttered an exclamation of surprise and anguish, and threw himself upon his knees by his side. Robin smiled upon him, as his faint eyes turned to him, and stretched forth his hand to greet him.

"Holy Virgin! Robin, what does this mean?" gasped Will. "Thou dost lie here as if bereft of motion; thy cheek is ashy pale, thine eyes glazed, and dost look as if the grim hand of death was on thee. What is the meaning of this? Art thou wounded? Does he live still who has done this? Speak, Robin — Little John, for Saint Charity tell me!"

"The meaning thou shalt know anon, Will," faintly articulated Robin. "Will, thou hast said right, the grim hand of death is on me; I feel his icy hand upon my heart, and in a few short minutes I shall have passed from among ye."

"No, no, Robin, it cannot be so," cried Will, earnestly, "it cannot be; you over rate your danger. You must not die."

"It would be a dreary thought to me," said Robin, feebly, "to imagine that a time would never come when I should die. I have lived long, and lived happily, have been loved and honored as no man was ever before; and, though I may feel a pang of regret at parting with so many generous friends, such unwearying faithful followers, yet the pain is lessened by the

hope that we may again meet in a better world, and grasp hands in the same fervent spirit of fraternal fellowship as we have in this. I am glad thou'rt here, Will: I am very glad thou'rt by my side, Will, at my last hour, for we have been brothers in all things save the accident of birth. We were merry boys together, sharing our little property as freely and as sincerely as we shared our hearts, and from those early days until now we have had no division of spirit."

We have been in our elder days the same true friends we were in our childhood, dear Will; and for the possession of thy honest heart, which is, and has ever been, as pure as native gold, for the constant receipt of kindness bestowed, with all the fresh sincerity of incorruptible honesty, I do most earnestly thank thee, and with my dying lips do pray to the Holy Mother she will shower upon thee all the blessings life can give thee. For myself Will, I have tried to be to thee the same friend thou hast been to me, and it would please me to know I have not failed."

"Dear Robin! My first, my only friend!" exclaimed Will, sobbing like a child, scarce able to articulate his words, — "Thou hast been more than a brother to me; in all things have shown me such affection that had I not filled up my heart with thee as a boy, I should afterwards, had it only been out of gratitude for thy repeated kindnesses. I did love thee, Robin; no brother ever loved brother half so well; and, now thou art departing, I feel how strongly — how deeply — that love is implanted within me; and the thoughts of thy death are madness to me. Would to God I could lay down my life for thee! I should bless the moment that saw thee rise up in health as the breath quitted my body. I cannot bear it. I feel like a child — I — I —" his sobs literally drowned his words,

"Living in a house, Will, has made a woman of thee," uttered Robin, with an attempt at cheerfulness. "Hadst thou lived all the time in the green wood, thou wouldst have looked upon my death with a steadier eye and a firmer heart. Well, well; my heart feels with true gratitude the value of this exhibition of thy love for me, and thou mayst be sure that in this, my hour of death, I feel happy to know the hearts I deemed mine in life, do not change in my last moments.

God bless thee, Will, my single-hearted earnest friend! We shall meet no more in this life; but in the world to come I fondly hope we shall be reunited in the same loving friendliness as here. When I am dead, tell Maude, thy sweet wife, that I did not forget her in my last moments; that I cherished ever the kindest thoughts of her during life; that I loved her as a sister, and that at times, when I appeared to take slight notice of many little kindnesses, then most appreciated them affectionately and fervently. The Holy Virgin keep her! She has been a treasure to thee, Will, which thou knowest far better than I can tell you. Bear my last words of kind remembrance to her; and say I blessed her with my dying breath."

"I will, I will!" exclaimed Will, pressing Robin's hand earnestly, his words trembling as they were uttered, and the tears still streaming down his face.

"Farewell, Will; my end is approaching, our dear Lady shower her kindest gifts on thee and thine. Farewell! We part forever here, Will; if He who adjudges all things wills, we shall meet again never to be separated. God bless thee! When I am gone, thou wilt offer up a prayer for the friend of thy boyhood, the brother of thy heart, thy companion for many years — Robin Hood."

"May I never meet thee in Heaven, if I do not keep thy memory in my heart brighter than my honour," cried Will, with enthusiasm; "My first prayer in the morning, and my last at night, shall be for my oldest and best-loved friend. Fare — my throat chokes at the word — Fare — I cannot say it, Robin;" and Will, burying his face in his hands, wept in the bitterest anguish; Robin pressed his hand, and had no heart to try and soothe or check his grief; and so he turned to his merrie men—who were now all assembled and standing round in mute astonishment, a fierce desire of revenge burning in their eyes — and thus addressed them—

"My old companions, dear friends of my heart! Ye who have shared my toils and dangers, my joys and pleasures alike, with the same devotion and truth, receive my last thanks and blessings, my constant friends. I am quitting ye forever, but to the grave I bear with me the proud assurance of ever having had your love, your affectionate service tried to the death, and proved truer than steel; and I have loved ye truly and sincerely as brothers, one and all; and now, as my fleeting breath speeds from my soul, I am happy, proudly happy, to see the old, the loved faces around me, that I may look my last on them. Farewell, brothers! Saxons, we have made the Norman's tremble at our name, the poor to love us, and I die with that conviction cheerfully and resignedly. God bless you all! I fear not that I shall live in your memory; and if after death we can dwell with pleasure on the recollection of those we loved in life, I will have ye ever present in my memory. My old companions, bless you, bless you! And you, Little John, thou noble heart, thou more than brother! grieve not that I have quitted the old green wood forever; the birds will sing as sweetly, the sun shine as brightly, the flowers, the leaves, and the grass be as green, as fresh and fair, when I am gone, as ever, old friend. Thou hast told me often it is vain to grieve for what must be; therefore, thou dweller in my heart, shed no tear for me, but when you think of me, smile and believe I am happy — most happy. My time is come; give me thy hand, my kind, constant, dearly-loved friend; I would die with it in my grasp. It is well, I — my breath grows weaker, and everything is fading from my sight. When I am dead, lay me beneath the trysting tree by the side of Marian — and the flowers — and the old trees — it is thy hand I grasp, Little John?"

"It is," groaned Little John, the big tears rushing from his eyes with the agony of blood drops.

"It is well. Bless thee, old friend — I die happy — happy — Marian, we meet again — never — to—"

The voice ceased, and the bright unsullied spirit of the beloved of many hearts, the noble high-soul'd Robin Hood, had passed away.

His followers, broken-hearted at their loss, bore him sadly to the spot which was to be his last earthly resting place; beneath the old trysting tree, in the heart of the old wood — where he had passed the happiest hours of his life, the scene of all his festivities, the assembling place for those whom he loved, the forest home which had always sped forth its arms to afford him a shelter; and which, as it had been a resting place in life, now performed the same kind office for his beloved Marian and himself in death. There, in obedience to his last wish, was he laid close beside her, his yew bow and sheaf of arrows at his side; and his favourite hound, which Little John slew on the grave, that he might serve no other master, was placed at his feet; and then, amid the tears and prayers of all around, the remains of their gallant leader was hid from the sight of the merrie men forever.

Thus ended the career of him whose life forms one of the most extraordinary features in the annals of this country. Thus passed away — the victim of one of a sex whom he had ever most highly honored — one adored by the common people far and near; his memory revered for the open-handed generous hearted charity with which he relieved wants, and the bold chivalric spirit with which he endeavored to lift the wretched serfs out of the galling clutches of a dire oppression. He who at all times, and in all seasons, was at the service of those who needed his aid, at any risk, at any personal sacrifice, undaunted by appalling dangers, unmoved at the prospect of future punishments, was thus struck down, and by the hand of woman; her from whom, having exhibited such devotion, such true knightly feeling in her behalf, he could least have expected the blow. Thus he, who had faced the perils of fierce conflicts, encountered foes singly and in numbers, had withstood the desperate efforts of well-trained swordsmen, the chance bolts in a *melée*, or death-dealing weapons in a sanguinary fray; — he who had dared and escaped all these, now gave up the ghost, treacherously and wickedly deprived of life by means which added one strong pang to the regrets which he felt at parting with his old companions and the old familiar places for ever.

Thrice ten thousand times would he rather have fallen, with his bonnie yew bow in his hand, or his trusty sword, than thus steal out of the world, the victim of a malicious wanton, who, under the garb of saintly sanctity, covered sins of the most infamous description. But thus it was to be; and

the '*just, generous, benevolent, faithful, and beloved,*' quitted the scenes of his vicissitudes, trials, exploits, happiness, and sorrow, for a better world, leaving behind him a name which has come down to us intact, extolled by a priest for his piety, by the oldest historians for his humanity and gentleness, and universally honored for the efforts which he made as the last of his race, to shake off the oppressive yoke of the Norman conquerors.

PEACE TO HIS MANES

['*Deified Spirits*']!

The property of the band was shared amongst its members, and then they separated, scattering themselves far and wide, some returning to their homes, some to other counties, some to foreign lands in various parts of the old world, but none to return as inhabitants of the once merrie old wood.

Little John was the last to quit it; he wandered to and fro among its now dreary alleys and glades, a broken-spirited, broken-hearted man. Many were the efforts be made in solitary loneliness to draw bow against the fleeing buck, but his hand had lost its cunning, and the fleet stag would fly among the leafy nooks unhurt, while he, with a heavy heart, would turn away with a sigh, exclaiming with a full heart, "It was not so in bonnie Robin's day."

And anon he would strive to wake up the echoes of the old wood with a note from his horn, but it was a sad sound; his eyes would fill with tears, his throat would swell and pain, and he would turn his back on the old wood, for it was no longer a place for him.

And he took up his abode with Will Scarlet and his brothers, but he found no resting place. They strove to cheer him, and turn his thoughts from him whom in life he had so loved, but who was now passed away, but in vain; he was a broken-hearted man, and he sought only now to lay down and die, that the impatient spirit, chained here to a weak and wasting frame, might soar aloft and join that chief who on earth alone reigned supreme in his heart.

And that time was not long coming; the one constant hope and wish was permitted him; and one bright morning his cousin, Will Scarlet, who, with the most affectionate solicitude, tended him, sought him in the fresh cool air, found him reclining against the trunk of an aged oak tree, his face turned towards the old forest, a calm smile playing over his pale features, but his eye was glazed, his features rigid. The spirit of Death had laid his hand upon his heart, and Little John was with his chief in the land of spirits.

Poor Will Scarlet was sorely grieved; tears of sincere regret were shed by him over the inanimate body. He raised him tenderly from his cold resting place, and bore him to his dwelling; from thence he was carried to his grave in Hathersage churchyard, about six miles from

Castleton, in Derbyshire. The grave is distinguished by a large stone at the head and one at the feet, on which are yet apparent to the curious visitor the initials I.L.

A strange story is told of one inquisitive antiquarian, who many years since, caused the grave to be opened, and, discovering some unusually large human bones, bore them away as the veritable remains of the renowned forester; but while they were in his possession he met with such a series of disasters and accidents — the sexton who had assisted him in the sacrilegious pillage, being also fearfully tormented — that to obtain peace he was compelled to restore them to their original resting place; and after their return the torments and troubles afflicting both antiquarian and sexton instantly ceased.

Perhaps our reader will kindly think what has been done weakly has been done earnestly, and join with us heartily in repeating the words of that sweet poet, John Keats —

Honour to the old bowstring!
Honour to the bugle horn!
Honour to the woods unshorn!
Honour to the Lincoln Green!
Honour to the archer keen!
Honour to the tight Little John!
And the horse he rode upon!
Honour to the bold Robin Hood!
Sleeping in the underwood!
Honour to Maid Marian!
And to all the Sherwood clan!

The End

APPENDIX ONE

Summary of *The Happiness Oath*
by Dawn Corleone



Dawn Corleone is our pen name for the artificial intelligence
which wrote the source material: *squibler.io*
and the summary: *noiz.io*
for this appendix

YOUR PERSONAL PURSUIT of HAPPINESS

"The Oath of Happiness"

"The Pursuit of Happiness" is the central theme of the Founding Documents of the United States. It was based on the ancient Greek concept of 'eudaimonia', which means "happiness, blessing or flourishing".

To achieve that state of mind, the Founders recognized that citizens needed a government that was just and which would enable and encourage everyone to live their best life.

Eudaimonia is achieved through each individual's **R**[oots] ----- Their families and their education--- **A**[nd] their **W**[ings] ----- Their Communities -----, working together to unleash both personal and community R.A.W. Power.

The framework is freely-available to everyone in the U.S. Constitution.

But, for many, if not most people, "The Pursuit of Happiness" often gets stalled because they don't know about the "The Oath of Happiness".

"The Oath" is a silent promise to yourself at the start of your day that you will accomplish two things

Do something extra for someone and Learn at least one new thing.

And then, before you fall asleep, silently review what you did and what you learned. Something that can be as simple as

*"Today I smiled at a stranger and I learned that I don't like
green eggs and ham" or as amazing as*

"Today I saved someone's life and I learned a useful life hack".

The first change that you experience will probably be almost immediate
---- More restful sleep.

But, in a relatively short time, you will find other improvements in your personal and professional lives, in addition to gaining more respect from both friends and strangers.

Before you write this off as foolishness,
you will lose nothing if you try it for a day or two

APPENDIX TWO

Summary of *Aesop's Impact on British Culture*
by Dawn Corleone



Dawn Corleone is our pen name for the artificial intelligence
which wrote the source material: *squibler.io*
and the summary *noiz.io*
for this appendix

Aesop's Fables and Their Enduring Legacy

Aesop's Fables represent not just a collection of engaging tales, but also a profound legacy of moral wisdom that has echoed through centuries. Although Aesop himself is a somewhat mysterious figure, likely a slave in ancient Greece, his attributed stories convey timeless themes of justice, virtue, and the human experience.

Origins and Historical Context

Aesop's Fables likely originated in an oral tradition, where stories were passed down by storytellers, capturing the imaginations of audiences. The earliest significant references to Aesop come from the 5th Century BC, particularly from Herodotus, who details Aesop's life as a lowly slave who gained wisdom and freedom, ultimately meeting a tragic end. These accounts, while somewhat unclear and debated among scholars, situate Aesop as a voice for the marginalized through his use of animal characters to express human flaws and virtues.

By the 1st Century, Phaedrus, a Roman poet and freedman, played a crucial role in adapting Aesop's fables into Latin verse, formalizing their status as literary works. His adaptations incorporated Roman religious elements, societal structures, and legal concepts, making these tales resonate with the specificities of Roman life while preserving their core moral messages. Phaedrus's versions ensured that Aesop's wisdom would reach a wider audience and continue to engage readers through direct and relatable language.

Cultural Significance and Educational Role

The fables became vital components of Roman education, serving as moral lessons that shaped young minds and emphasized qualities like diligence, honesty, and fairness. Their simplicity allowed children from diverse backgrounds to learn foundational ethical principles. By presenting practical moral scenarios with clear conclusions, Aesop's Fables became tools for developing critical thinking and social understanding.

The adaptability of these tales meant they could reflect the contemporary societal values and challenges of the time. For instance, the Victorian era saw the fables framed with a focus on industriousness, resonating with the values of hard work and self-discipline that defined that period. Consequently, the fables were not merely instructive; they were woven into the ethical fabric of society, contributing to the development of a shared moral discourse.

Continued Relevance and Modern Interpretations

As these fables spread across Europe and into Britain, they retained their appeal due to their universal themes, addressing the complexities of human behavior with animal allegories. Their morals—like "slow and steady wins the race" or "pride goes before a fall"—became part of the common vernacular, allowing them to influence literature, political discourse, and even public morality.

In modern contexts, Aesop's Fables have not only persisted as educational tools but have also found adaptability in contemporary literature and art. They are frequently invoked to illustrate ethical dilemmas in various fields, such as business ethics, governance, and personal development. The fables' narratives continue to shape human understanding of social dynamics and ethical behavior, proving their relevance in a fast-changing world.

Aesop's Fables embody a rich legacy that transcends time and cultural boundaries. Originating from an oral tradition and evolving through the contributions of historical figures like Phaedrus, these tales have become foundational texts in moral education and societal discourse. The enduring simplicity and wisdom encapsulated in these stories offer a timeless reflection on human nature, making Aesop's Fables a vital part of our literary and ethical heritage. As they continue to resonate in diverse contexts today, they affirm the power of storytelling as a means of imparting wisdom and fostering moral growth across generations.

The Influence of Aesop's Fables on the Roman Empire and Beyond

Aesop's fables played a crucial role in fostering a shared cultural identity across the vast expanses of the Roman Empire. As the empire expanded, these fables spread alongside Roman literature and educational practices, providing a common framework for ethical understanding among diverse populations, from merchants in Gaul to soldiers in Britannia and farmers in North Africa. The universal themes within the fables—addressing human nature and societal interactions—allowed for a degree of cultural coherence amid the empire's linguistic and cultural diversity.

The transmission of these fables did not end with the fall of the Roman Empire. When Roman influence reached Britain, the fables were introduced to local societies, serving as formative elements in the development of a shared cultural and ethical foundation. Their adaptability ensured that they could be integrated into existing traditions or simply act as influential narratives in the emerging literary and intellectual atmosphere of Roman Britain. The fables encapsulated wisdom that evolved over centuries, transitioning into new contexts and influencing societies long after their initial storytelling.

Despite the chaos that followed the fall of the Western Roman Empire, the fables proved resilient. Their brevity and moral weight made them ideal for preservation during a time when literary resources were dwindling. Monasteries became vital institutions for preserving and copying these tales, especially as religious scholars recognized their ethical lessons as useful for teaching and reinforcing Christian principles. The allegorical nature of the fables allowed for reinterpretation within a Christian context, linking Aesopian lessons with theological teachings.

The medieval manuscript tradition posed challenges for textual preservation due to the manual nature of copying, which could lead to variations, omissions, and reinterpretations by scribes. Nevertheless, the fables continued to circulate and adapt, ultimately influencing both the literary development in medieval Europe and the subsequent embrace of classical literature during the Carolingian Renaissance. This revival resulted in a renewed interest in the fables, which facilitated their transcription and preservation by monks in scriptoria.

By the time of the Renaissance, the vivid lessons and narratives of Aesop's fables were recognized for their pedagogical value and eloquence. Humanist scholars sought to restore and disseminate these classical texts, leading to new editions that included not just the fables but also commentaries and analyses on their moral implications. The advent of the printing press allowed Aesop's Fables to reach wider audiences, and their stories permeated educational materials, making moral instruction accessible to both the literate elite and the emerging middle class in England.

William Caxton, the first English printer, played a crucial role in the reception of Aesop's Fables within England by publishing an English edition in 1484. His translation and presentation facilitated the fables' adoption as essential reading materials for moral education. Caxton's efforts helped elevate Aesopian narratives into foundational texts of English literature, ensuring that the moral lessons contained within them became deeply embedded in the culture. Moreover, the fables provided a shared vocabulary of ethics that transcended class distinctions and served as a common reference for writers, educators, and the general populace.

In Elizabethan literary works, the influence of Aesop's Fables manifested in both direct references and subtle allusions, enriching the depth and complexity of Shakespeare's plays alongside those of his contemporaries. Characters in Shakespeare's works often mirrored the archetypes found in Aesopian tales, as seen in the prideful and self-deceived figures whose actions lead to their downfall, mirroring themes in fables. The familiar moral conclusions of the fables served as an accessible framework, allowing audiences to draw connections between the narratives and the ethical lessons while addressing contemporary societal issues.

Through clever adaptations and explorations of Aesop's themes, Elizabethan writers reflected not only the moral dimensions of human experience but also engaged with pressing socio-political questions of their time. The interplay between Aesopian wisdom and Shakespearean characterisation illuminated a broader discourse on virtue, vice, and the nature of humanity, demonstrating that these ancient tales were not merely relics of the past, but vital components in the evolving understanding of ethics, morality, and governance.

The journey of Aesop's Fables, from their origins in ancient storytelling through their adaptation into Roman culture, their preservation in the Middle Ages, and their revival during the Renaissance, showcases their enduring power as tools for moral instruction. The fables bridged diverse cultures and time periods, facilitating a shared understanding of human nature and ethical conduct that resonated deeply within the contexts of each society they touched. William Caxton's contributions significantly catalyzed their dissemination in English, fostering an appreciation for Aesop's wisdom that continued to shape English literature and moral thought for generations, culminating in their rich integration into the works of Shakespeare and other literary figures of the Elizabethan age.

Aesop's Fables: Their Impact on Literature During the Victorian Era

Aesop's Fables became powerful narratives during the Victorian era, influencing literature, education, and cultural values across Britain and its empire.

The Role in Education

In Victorian schools, Aesop's Fables became staple educational resources. Picture young students reading stories about a clever fox or a diligent ant. These fables provided clear moral lessons that were easily digestible, making them ideal for teaching reading and writing. For example:

"The Ant and the Grasshopper" taught children the importance of hard work and planning for the future, reinforcing the value of diligence in a rapidly industrializing society.

"The Tortoise and the Hare" highlighted that slow, steady effort often wins the race, promoting perseverance over innate talent.

The fables offered a framework to instill virtues such as honesty, diligence, and respect for authority, thus shaping the character of children as responsible citizens. They were not merely stories; they served as moral compasses that prepared young minds for their expected roles in Victorian society.

Cultural Dissemination through Empire

The British Empire played a significant role in spreading these fables across its territories. Missionaries and educators transported Aesop's tales to colonies like India, Australia, and parts of Africa, introducing versions in local languages. This integration served multiple functions:

It educated colonized populations in British values.

It instilled the virtues deemed essential for an orderly society, such as industriousness and obedience.

However, this use of fables also carried underlying assumptions about superiority. For instance, the virtues celebrated in these narratives were often those that reinforced the colonial status quo, promoting obedience to authority while quietly dismissing local customs and stories.

Critique and Complexities

As the Victorian era progressed, some began to question the adequacy of Aesop's moral lessons. Critics pointed out that the tales oversimplified complex social realities. For example, the notion that hard work leads to success didn't account for inequalities that often hindered individuals from achieving their potential. Moreover, the moral lessons, while well-intentioned, sometimes reinforced social hierarchies that benefited the ruling elite and overlooked the struggles of the lower classes.

Some authors and thinkers also began to remix Aesop's Fables, infusing them with irony or humor. This adaptation allowed for a more critical exploration of their themes:

In a satirical retelling, the "Ant" might be portrayed as blindly following societal expectations while the "Grasshopper" could represent creative freedom and rebellion.

This adaptation reflects an evolving cultural landscape where traditional narratives were being reconsidered and utilized to critique contemporary societal norms.

Dickens and Aesopian Influence

Prominent Victorian novelist Charles Dickens skillfully wove Aesopian themes into his own narratives. He created rich, dynamic characters whose stories echoed Aesop's morals, tackling the challenges of Victorian life. For instance:

Uriah Heep from *David Copperfield* encapsulated the deceptive qualities of the fox, showing how cunning can mask true intentions.

Oliver Twist represented the vulnerabilities of the innocent, akin to the mouse in *The Lion and the Mouse*, stressing the need for compassion and the interconnectedness of society.

Through these narratives, Dickens critiqued social injustices while imbibing the wisdom of Aesop's Fables, demonstrating how these ancient tales could illuminate contemporary issues.

Aesop's Fables thrived in the Victorian era, significantly influencing literature, education, and moral instruction. While they served as vital tools for cultivating character and moral understanding among children, their role in reinforcing colonial values and social hierarchies cannot be ignored. Moreover, as critics and writers like Dickens reinterpreted these stories, they highlighted the complexity of applying universal morals to a changing societal landscape, emphasizing the potential for both critique and adaptation in timeless narratives. The legacy of Aesop remains relevant, reminding us that storytelling can shape not just individual character but also cultural identity.

Aesop's Fables in Educational and Cultural Contexts

Aesop's Fables have had a significant impact throughout history, especially within the British Empire, where they became a common reference point across various demographics, aiding communication between colonial administrators and indigenous populations. Despite their simplicity, these fables resonated deeply and adapted well to different cultural contexts, becoming instruments of moral instruction and cultural assimilation. Here's a concise overview of the main themes and lessons derived from Aesop's Fables, especially focusing on their political and educational significance.

Key Themes and Concepts

Moral Lessons

Each fable conveys clear moral lessons that address universal human experiences. They often deal with themes such as:

Prudence vs. Foolishness

For instance, the story of "The Ant and the Grasshopper" emphasizes the value of hard work and foresight over laziness.

Consequences of Greed

"The Dog and Its Reflection" serves as a cautionary tale against covetousness.

Cooperation

"The Bundle of Sticks" highlights the strength found in unity, underscoring the importance of R.A.W Power.

Cultural Transmission and Adaptation

The fables were introduced into various colonial educational settings, allowing for local reinterpretations. For example, indigenous populations often adapted fables to critique colonial authority or reflect their unique social structures, thus reclaiming narratives that were intended as tools of control.

Political Rhetoric

Politicians in both Parliament and the pulpit frequently referenced Aesop's Fables to convey complex ideas simply. By invoking familiar tales, leaders could present arguments for social policies or critiques of opponents without appearing overly partisan.

For instance, drawing on "The Wolf and the Lamb" in discussions about foreign policy could underscore themes of power imbalance, making the moral of unjust aggression easily recognizable.

Educational Use

Aesop's Fables remained prominent in educational curricula as a means of instilling virtues in students, with their stories providing examples of ethical behavior that students could relate to. The accessibility of the fables made them suitable for diverse audiences, serving both moral and instructional purposes.

Connection to Eudaimonia

The fables align with the concept of eudaimonia, or human flourishing, advocating for virtues that lead to both individual fulfillment and societal well-being. They promote notions of moderation, cooperation, and effort toward communal goals, which resonate with democratic ideals.

Impactful Examples

Reinterpretation in India

In Indian vernacular schools, fables like "The Lion and the Mouse" were re-imagined, focusing on resourcefulness, especially in contexts of colonial oppression.

Use in Religious Context

Clergymen utilized fables to highlight moral teachings, using stories like "The Ant and the Grasshopper" to instill values of diligence and preparedness in congregants.

Aesop's Fables not only provided entertainment but also facilitated deeper conversations about morality, culture, and the human experience across various contexts. Their adaptability ensured their relevance throughout history, making them potent educational tools and influential narratives in both political and religious spheres. By connecting ancient wisdom to contemporary issues, Aesop's Fables continue to shape moral discourse and public understanding of human behavior.

The Enduring Legacy of Aesop's Fables in Shaping Narrative and Moral Understanding

Aesop's Fables, ancient tales featuring anthropomorphic animals and insightful morals, have played an essential role in human storytelling for centuries. These narratives exemplify the human need for story, helping us make sense of complex social issues and personal experiences through relatable allegories. At their core, Aesop's Fables blend intellectual engagement with emotional resonance, offering lessons that apply to both personal growth and societal conduct.

The Power of Allegory

Allegory, as exemplified by Aesop's work, allows for the exploration of deeper meanings while drawing readers into a captivating narrative. Engaging not just the mind, but also the heart, these fables invite audiences to participate actively in their interpretation. For example, a tale like "The Fisherman and the Little Fish" serves as a subtle critique of short-sightedness in resource management, reminding readers that immediate gains could lead to future losses—a valuable lesson in contexts ranging from personal decision-making to economic policy.

Political Utility of Allegory

In political discourse, allegory becomes a strategic tool. Politicians can critique policies or figures indirectly, framing their messages through fables while maintaining civility. For example, referencing "The Fisherman and the Little Fish" can imply criticism of favoritism shown towards certain industries without launching direct attacks. This method promotes dialogue and debate on ideas rather than personal disputes, fostering a more constructive environment for discussions.

The Evolution of Aesop's Tales

The journey of Aesop's Fables through history—from oral tradition in ancient Greece to written collections and modern adaptations—underscores their adaptability and relevance. The process of retelling these stories allowed for continuous reinterpretation; as societies evolved, so did the fables. They live on not just as static texts but as dynamic narratives that still resonate today, shaped by generations of storytellers who preserved and reshaped their meanings.

Teaching Through Storytelling

Aesop's Fables serve an educational purpose by providing the tools necessary for moral education. With easily digestible plots and clear messages, these tales cultivate virtues such as honesty, diligence, and empathy in children. Fables like "The Boy Who Cried Wolf" teach consequences, instructing young audiences on the value of trust and the repercussions of deceit. The structure of these narratives emphasizes practical wisdom, making moral lessons memorable and applicable.

Creating a National Character

In British culture, Aesop's Fables have shaped the national character by instilling core values. The industriousness of the ant in "The Ant and the Grasshopper" communicates the significance of hard work and preparation, especially relevant during industrial expansion. Such principles influenced societal attitudes toward productivity and self-reliance, forming the character of a society increasingly embracing capitalism and industriousness.

Ethics of Society and Interpersonal Relationships

The fables also impart lessons on justice and fairness. Stories like "The Lion and the Mouse" remind readers of the interdependence among individuals in society. Respecting and valuing all contributions, regardless of perceived status, fosters a community where support and mutual aid are essential for survival. This narrative reinforces the idea that robust societies rely on cooperation, and that true strength lies in acknowledging the worth of each member.

Moreover, the implicit critique of arbitrary power in fables such as "The Wolf and the Lamb" sharpens societal awareness about authority. Through vivid storytelling, Aesop delineates ethical guidelines for evaluating power dynamics and the importance of fairness in governance. By illustrating that deceit and manipulation lead to inevitable consequences, the fables inspire critical thought about leadership, encouraging individuals to demand justice.

Humor and Irony

Importantly, the wit and irony embedded in Aesop's narratives allow for social critique. The humorous interactions among characters often reveal human follies, questioning societal norms and behaviors. This playful tone invites readers to reflect on their behaviors in light of common absurdities, reinforcing moral lessons while entertaining.

Aesop's Fables embody rich storytelling that transcends time, blending allegory, moral instruction, and humor. They not only educate but instill foundational virtues, foster understanding of justice, and reinforce community values. Their adaptability across cultures and eras demonstrates their profound relevance, ensuring that the wisdom contained within these narratives continues to guide human behavior and societal norms. Far beyond mere children's tales, Aesop's Fables encourage critical thought about personal and communal ethics, making them an essential part of our narrative heritage and the formation of a more harmonious society.

The Enduring Influence and Relevance of Aesop's Fables

Aesop's Fables are profound narratives that have shaped moral and ethical understanding across cultures and centuries. These fables often revolve around simple but powerful lessons about human behavior, societal norms, and the consequences of our actions. Their humor and irony, coupled with clever characters, provide rich engagement for audiences, making complex ideas understandable and relatable.

The Core Themes of the Fables

Cleverness and Ingenuity

Many fables illustrate the value of perseverance and resourcefulness. For instance, in "The Crow and the Pitcher," the crow's determination to reach water by dropping pebbles into a pitcher showcases an entertaining solution to a problem. This celebrates the ingenuity inherent in human nature, connecting deeply with audiences who appreciate clever solutions to everyday challenges.

Irony and Self-Reflection

Aesop's Fables often highlight irony to underscore the gap between appearance and reality. "The Fox and the Grapes" demonstrates how the fox dismisses grapes as sour when he cannot reach them, illustrating a universal tendency to rationalize failure. This invites readers to reflect on their own habits of self-deception.

Animal Archetypes as Social Mirrors

By using animal characters, Aesop's narratives become a humorous yet pointed satire of human behavior. For example, "The Ass in the Lion's Skin" critiques deception and the assumption of false authority. This method provides a comfortable distance from direct criticism of human flaws while still encouraging introspection.

Political Commentary

Many fables serve as allegories for societal and political issues. "The Frogs Who Desired a King" warns against the dangers of unsound decisions and dissatisfaction with leadership. In this way, the fables offer timeless insights into governance, urging careful consideration of the consequences of political change.

Cultural Significance in British Society

Aesop's Fables hold a particularly strong place in British culture, where humor is often combined with social commentary. Through widespread adaptations, such as those by Joseph Jacobs, the fables were contextualized for British audiences, maintaining their humor while addressing contemporary social norms and values.

Building a Shared Cultural Lexicon

The fables have contributed significantly to a shared cultural lexicon, with phrases and moral lessons derived from them becoming part of everyday language. Expressions like "sour grapes" or "the dog in the manger" illustrate concepts of envy and selfishness, resonating across different contexts and reinforcing moral lessons.

Educational Foundations

Historically, Aesop's Fables have served as foundational texts in education, teaching young learners about ethics and social behavior. Their clarity and brevity make them ideal tools for building literacy while simultaneously conveying important moral lessons.

A Foreshadowing of Contemporary Issues

Despite their ancient origins, Aesop's Fables are remarkably adaptable to modern issues. In contexts such as business ethics, the lessons on integrity from "The Boy Who Cried Wolf" remind professionals of the long-term consequences of dishonesty. Similarly, "The Ant and the Grasshopper" can be applied to discussions about financial responsibility and long-term planning in the modern economy.

A Living Tradition

Aesop's Fables offer timeless wisdom that continues to resonate in contemporary society. Their simplicity, accessible language, and universal themes provide a rich resource for moral education and ethical reflection. The fables are not static relics of the past but vibrant narratives that actively engage readers in complex conversations about human behavior, guiding us towards introspection and a deeper understanding of our shared experiences. As they adapt to new contexts, Aesop's Fables will undoubtedly remain relevant and vital, echoing fundamental truths about life and morality for generations to come.

APPENDIX THREE

Summary of *Aesop's Legacy of Liberty*
by Dawn Corleone



Dawn Corleone is our pen name for the artificial intelligence
which wrote the source material: *squibler.io*
and the summary: *noiz.io*
for this appendix

Summary of Aesop's Legacy of Liberty

Introduction to Aesop and His Context

Born around 620-560 BC, Aesop's life is often depicted through a blend of fact and legend, with speculations about his origins ranging from ancient regions like Phrygia to Greek civilizations. A fascinating aspect of Aesop's story is the belief that he may have been a slave, which would shape his keen insights into human nature and social dynamics—a perspective reflected in many of his fables.

Imagine Aesop listening attentively as he navigates the bustling marketplaces and lush landscapes of ancient Greece, absorbing the societal contrasts between the privileged elite and the oppressed majority. His keen observations and two-fold experience, whether as a slave or a person of some degree of freedom, gave him unique insights into power dynamics that became embedded in his stories.

The Legacy of His Fables

The survival of Aesop's fables, conveyed originally through oral tradition and later compiled in written forms, showcases their adaptability and enduring relevance. Each story is a simplistically-crafted narrative that encapsulates complex moral lessons, emphasizing social inequality, justice, and human behavior. These tales not only entertain but also encourage reflection on values such as honesty, humility, and perseverance.

Consider the fable of *The Boy Who Cried Wolf*, for example—you might explain to a child that it teaches honesty and trustworthiness. On a deeper level, it warns against the erosion of credibility and trust within a community, underscoring how one person's lies can have far-reaching impacts.

Key Fables and Their Messages

Aesop's fables delve into various themes, including the perils of greed, ambition, and the importance of community.

The Goose That Laid the Golden Eggs

This fable warns against the dangers of greed, where a farmer's desire for more riches leads to losing everything. Like the farmer's desire to gain immediate wealth, we often forget that consistent, sustainable prosperity requires patience and prudent management.

The Ant and the Grasshopper

Highlighting diligence and foresight, this fable contrasts the ant's methodical preparation against the grasshopper's carefree attitude. The consequences of procrastination today might resonate with readers navigating the pressures of a fast-paced, instant-gratification culture.

The Fox and the Grapes

Delving into self-deception, this tale illustrates how we often downplay unattainable desires as unworthy. Anyone who has ever given up on a goal can relate to the lesson of accepting limitations and avoiding the cowardly comfort of rationalizations.

A central thread in Aesop's work is the recognition that each fable serves as a subtle critique of social norms, embodied in deceptively simple narratives. An example is *The Lion and the Mouse*, illustrating that even the smallest creatures can have significant impacts on those in power through acts of kindness.

Lessons for Today

At their core, Aesop's fables remain versatile tools for moral and ethical discourse, engaging readers across generations. They invite personal reflection while highlighting the importance of humility, cooperation, and social justice. Aesop's ability to frame profound truths within simple tales ensures that his legacy continues to challenge and inspire contemporary thought on critical social issues.

In essence, Aesop's stories, told under olive trees or shared around campfires, transcend their ancient origins, remaining relevant in today's society where human experiences, relationships, and values are as complex as ever. His fables serve as timeless reminders that the wisdom of the past can inform our present and future in navigating the nuances of human interaction and the moral dilemmas we face.

"Aesop's Fables and Their Cultural Impact"

Aesop's fables, ancient stories featuring animals with human traits, serve as enduring moral and social commentaries that are still relevant today. Primarily through allegory — a storytelling technique where characters and events represent deeper abstract ideas — Aesop's narratives address timeless themes like justice, pride, corruption, and human nature.

The Fable of "The Fox and the Crow"

Another example of Aesop's rich storytelling can be seen in "The Fox and the Crow." The fable begins with a crow perched in a tree, holding a piece of cheese. The crow boasts an exaggerated sense of self-importance, but its vanity makes it susceptible to flattery. The fox, observing the crow, cunningly compliments its beauty and suggests that a melodious voice would enhance its allure. The crow, flattered by these words, attempts to sing, inadvertently dropping the cheese. The fox slyly snatches it up and escapes, teaching the lesson that, when driven by pride and vanity, one can become blind to manipulation.

Lessons Embedded in Simplicity

Aesop's narratives are not just about the actions of animals; they encourage readers to reflect on human behaviors and societal norms. Each fable acts as a miniature case study, allowing for critical thinking:

"The Tortoise and the Hare" teaches the importance of perseverance over arrogance.

"The Boy Who Cried Wolf" deconstructs issues of trust and the consequences of deceit.

"The Dog and His Reflection" illustrates greed and misjudgment in pursuing superficial gains.

These stories invite readers to analyze the motivations behind actions and to contemplate the broader societal implications of personal choices.

Cultural and Historical Context

Aesop's fables circulated in ancient Greece, intersecting with a complex political landscape marked by inequalities such as the exclusion of women and slaves from the democratic process. Their simplicity allowed them to critique power structures and social injustices without threatening direct confrontation. For instance, the tale of "The Frogs Who Desired a King" criticizes blind acceptance of leadership, cautioning against the desire for authority that may bring tyranny.

Impact Through Time

Over time, Aesop's fables have transcended linguistic and cultural boundaries, adapted across generations and mediums. They influenced political thought, artistic expressions, and moral education throughout history while addressing contemporary issues. For instance:

Modern adaptations now engage with themes like environmental sustainability and social justice.

Idioms derived from these tales, such as "sour grapes," reflect their embeddedness in everyday language and culture.

Importance in Education

The pedagogical value of Aesop's fables remains significant; they are tools that promote children's moral development and critical thinking skills. Their concise narratives encourage children to engage actively with the material, fostering a habit of self-reflection and ethical reasoning.

Aesop's fables, while seemingly simple tales, contain profound insights into human behavior and societal dynamics. They are not just entertaining stories for children; they are vital narratives that encourage moral reflection and social commentary. Whether through the pitfalls of vanity, the importance of perseverance, or the complexities of trust, Aesop's legacy challenges us to think critically about ourselves and the world around us. Their enduring relevance serves as a powerful reminder of the transformative potential of storytelling.

Heroes are individuals who exhibit extraordinary courage, sacrifice, and bravery in the face of danger or adversity. While heroism is often associated with adults, the seeds of heroism can be found in young people as well. Traits exhibited during youth can develop and manifest into heroism in adulthood. These traits include *empathy*, *resilience*, *determination*, *leadership*, and *altruism*.

Empathy, the ability to understand and share the feelings of others, is a key trait in children that can lead to heroism in adulthood. Young people who demonstrate compassion and concern for others are more likely to grow into adults who are willing to help those in need, even at personal risk or sacrifice. Empathy allows individuals to connect with others on a deeper level and motivates them to take action to alleviate suffering or injustice.

Resilience is another important trait that can lay the foundation for heroism in adulthood. Young people who face adversity or challenges with perseverance and strength are more likely to develop the courage and determination to overcome obstacles and make a difference in the world. Resilient individuals are able to bounce back from setbacks and setbacks and continue to strive for their goals, even in the face of adversity.

Determination is a trait that often sets heroes apart from others. Young people who demonstrate persistence and drive in pursuing their goals are more likely to grow into adults who are willing to take risks and make sacrifices to achieve their objectives. Determination fuels the passion and

motivation needed to stand up for what is right and make a positive impact in the world.

Leadership is a trait that can also foster heroism in adults. Young people who exhibit leadership qualities, such as confidence, vision, and the ability to inspire and motivate others, are more likely to grow into adults who are able to lead by example and rally others to a cause. Leaders have the power to influence and inspire others to take action and make a difference in the world.

Altruism, the selfless concern for the well-being of others, is a trait that is often associated with heroism. Young people who demonstrate kindness, generosity, and a willingness to help those in need are more likely to grow into adults who are willing to put the needs of others before their own and make sacrifices for the greater good. Altruistic individuals are driven by a sense of duty and compassion to make the world a better place for everyone.

Courage is perhaps the most defining trait of heroism. Young people who show bravery and fearlessness in the face of adversity are more likely to grow into adults who are willing to risk their comfort or reputation to stand up for what is right. Courage enables individuals to face challenges head-on and take action to make a difference, even in the face of uncertainty or personal loss.

Selflessness is another trait that is essential for heroism. Young people who demonstrate a willingness to put the needs of others before their own are more likely to grow into adults who are willing to make sacrifices and take risks to help those in need. Selfless individuals are driven by a sense of compassion and duty to make the world a better place for everyone, regardless of personal cost.

Integrity is a trait that is closely linked to heroism. Young people who demonstrate honesty, moral principles, and a strong sense of right and wrong are more likely to grow into adults who are willing to stand up for their beliefs and values, even in the face of opposition. Integrity enables individuals to act with honor and dignity, even when faced with difficult choices or temptations.

Generosity is a trait that can also lead to heroism in adults. Young people who demonstrate a willingness to share their resources, time, and talents with others are more likely to grow into adults who are willing to make sacrifices and take risks to help those in need. Generous individuals are driven by a desire to make a positive impact in the world and improve the lives of others, even at personal cost.

APPENDIX FOUR

Aesop's Fables and Sun Tzu Sampler
by Dawn Corleone



Dawn Corleone is our pen name for the artificial intelligence
which wrote the source material: *squibler.io*
and the summary: *noiz.io*
for this appendix

Aesop's Fables

THE FOX AND THE GRAPES

A hungry fox saw some fine bunches of grapes hanging from a vine that was trained along a high trellis, and did his best to reach them by jumping as high as he could into the air. But it was all in vain, for they were just out of reach, so he gave up trying, and walked away with an air of dignity and unconcern, remarking, "I thought those grapes were ripe, but I see now they are quite sour."

In Other Words:

One may know how to conquer without being able to do it --- Sun Tzu

THE CAT AND THE MICE

There was once a house that was overrun with mice. A cat heard of this, and said to herself "That's the place for me," and off she went and took up her quarters in the house, and caught the mice one by one and ate them. At last the mice could stand it no longer, and they determined to take to their holes and stay there. "That's awkward," said the cat to herself : "The only thing to do is to coax them out by a trick." So she considered a while, and then climbed up the wall and let herself hang down by her hind legs from a peg, and pretended to be dead. By and by a mouse peeped out and saw the cat hanging there. "Aha !" it cried, "you're very clever, madam, no doubt, but you may turn yourself into a bag of meal hanging there, if you like, yet you won't catch us coming anywhere near you."

In Other Words:

*The opportunity of defeating your adversary
is provided by your adversary. --- Sun Tzu*

THE MISCHIEVOUS DOG

There was once a dog who used to snap at people and bite them without any provocation, and who was a great nuisance to every one who came to his master's house. So his master fastened a bell round his neck to warn people of his presence. The dog was very proud of the bell, and strutted about tinkling it with immense satisfaction. But an old dog came up to him and said, "The fewer airs you give yourself the better, my friend. You don't think, do you, that your bell was given you as a reward of merit? On the contrary, it is a badge of disgrace."

In Other Words:

*Whoever advances without coveting fame and retreats without
fearing disgrace, whose only thought is to protect his country and
do good service, is the jewel of the kingdom --- Sun Tzu*

THE WOLF IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING

A wolf resolved to disguise himself in order that he might prey upon a flock of sheep without fear of detection. So he clothed himself in a sheepskin, and slipped among the sheep when they were out at pasture. He completely deceived the shepherd, and when the flock was penned for the night he was shut in with the rest. But that very night as it happened, the shepherd, requiring a supply of mutton for the table, laid hands on the wolf in mistake for a sheep, and killed him with his knife on the spot.

In Other Words:

There are positions which must not be contested --- Sun Tzu

MERCURY AND THE WOODMAN

A woodman was felling a tree on the bank of a river, when his ax, glancing off the trunk, flew out of his hands and fell into the water. As he stood by the water's edge lamenting his loss. Mercury appeared and asked him the reason for his grief ; and on learning what had happened, out of pity for his distress he dived into the river and, bringing up a golden axe, asked him if that was the one he had lost. The woodman replied that it was not, and Mercury then dived a second time, and, bringing up a silver ax, asked if that was his. "No, that is not mine either," said the woodman. Once more Mercury dived into the river, and brought up the missing ax. The woodman was over-joyed at recovering his property, and thanked his benefactor warmly ; and the latter was so pleased with his honesty that he made him a present of the other two axes. When the Woodman told the story to his companions, one of these was filled with envy of his good fortune and determined to try his luck for himself. So he went and began to fell a tree at the edge of the river, and presently contrived to let his ax drop into the water. Mercury appeared as before, and, on learning that his ax had fallen in, he dived and brought up a golden ax, as he had done on the previous occasion. Without waiting to be asked whether it was his or not the fellow cried, "That's mine, that's mine," and stretched out his hand eagerly for the prize : but Mercury was so disgusted at his dishonesty that he not only declined to give him the golden ax, but also refused to recover for him the one he had let fall into the stream.

In Other Words:

When one acts with benevolence, justice, and righteousness, there will be unity in mind and all will be happy to serve you --- Sun Tzu

THE PEACOCK AND THE CRANE

A peacock taunted a crane with the dullness of her plumage. "Look at my brilliant colors," said she, "and see how much finer they are than your poor feathers." "I am not denying," replied the crane, "that yours are far gayer than mine; but when it comes to flying I can soar into the clouds, whereas you are confined to the earth like any dunghill cock."

In Other Words:

You have to believe in yourself. --- Sun Tzu

THE ASS, THE FOX, AND THE LION

An ass and a fox went into partnership and sallied out to forage for food together. They hadn't gone far before they saw a lion coming their way, at which they were both dreadfully frightened. But the fox thought he saw a way of saving his own skin, and went boldly up to the lion and whispered in his ear, "I'll manage that you shall get hold of the ass without the trouble of stalking him, if you'll promise to let me go free." The lion agreed to this, and the fox then rejoined his companion and contrived before long to lead him by a hidden pit, which some hunter had dug as a trap for wild animals, and into which he fell. When the lion saw that the ass was safely caught and couldn't get away, it was to the fox that he first turned his attention, and he soon finished him off, and then at his leisure proceeded to feast upon the ass.

In Other Words:

Opportunistic relationships can hardly be kept constant. --- Sun Tzu

THE GRASSHOPPER AND THE ANTS

One fine day in winter some ants were busy drying their store of corn, which had got rather damp during a long spell of rain. Presently up came a grasshopper and begged them to spare her a few grains, "For," she said, "I'm simply starving." The ants stopped work for a moment, though this was against their principles. "May we ask," said they, "What you were doing with yourself all last summer? Why didn't you collect a store of food for the winter?" "The fact is," replied the grasshopper, "I was so busy singing that I hadn't the time." "If you spent the summer singing," replied the ants, "you can't do better than spend the winter dancing."

And they chuckled and went on with their work.

In Other Words:

Plan for what it is difficult while it is easy, do what is great while it is small.

--- Sun Tzu

THE CROW AND THE PITCHER

A thirsty crow found a pitcher with some water in it, but so little was there that, try as she might, she could not reach it with her beak and it seemed as though she would die of thirst within sight of the remedy. At last she hit upon a clever plan. She began dropping pebbles into the pitcher, and with each pebble the water rose a little higher until at last it reached the brim, and the knowing bird was enabled to quench her thirst.

In Other Words:

Ponder and deliberate before you make a move. --- Sun Tzu

THE MISTRESS AND HER SERVANTS

A widow, thrifty and industrious, had two servants, whom she kept pretty hard at work. They were not allowed to be long abed in the mornings, but the old lady had them up and doing as soon as the cock crew. They disliked intensely having to get up at such an hour, especially in wintertime : and they thought that if it were not for the cock waking up their mistress so horribly early, they could sleep longer. So they caught it and wrung its neck. But they weren't prepared for the consequences. For what happened was that their mistress, not hearing the cock crow as usual, waked them up earlier than ever, and set them to work in the middle of the night.

In Other Words:

He will win who knows when to fight and when not to fight. --- Sun Tzu

THE FOX AND THE STORK

A fox invited a stork to dinner, at which the only fare provided was a large flat dish of soup. The fox lapped it up with great relish, but the stork with her long bill tried in vain to partake of the savoury broth. Her evident distress caused the sly fox much amusement. But not long after the stork invited him in turn, and set before him a pitcher with a long and narrow neck, into which she could get her bill with ease. Thus, while she enjoyed her dinner, the fox sat by hungry and helpless, for it was impossible for him to reach the tempting contents of the vessel.

In Other Words:

First lay plans which will ensure victory, and then carry them out. --- Sun Tzu

THE FOX AND THE MONKEY

A fox and a monkey were on the road together, and fell into a dispute as to which of the two was the better born. They kept it up for some time, till they came to a place where the road passed through a cemetery full of monuments, when the monkey stopped and looked about him and gave a great sigh. " Why do you sigh? " said the fox. The monkey pointed to the tombs and replied, "All the monuments that you see here were put up in honor of my forefathers, who in their day were eminent men. The fox was speechless for a moment, but quickly recovering he said, " Oh ! don't stop at any lie, sir; you're quite safe : I'm sure none of your ancestors will rise up and expose you.

In Other Words:

At first, exhibit the coyness of a maiden, until the adversary gives you an opening; afterwards emulate the rapidity of a running hare, and it will be too late for the adversary to oppose you. --- Sun Tzu

THE BEAR AND THE TRAVELLERS

Two travelers were on the road together, when a bear suddenly appeared on the scene. Before he observed them, one made for a tree at the side of the road, and climbed up into the branches and hid there. The other was not so nimble as his companion ; and, as he could not escape, he threw himself on the ground and pretended to be dead. The bear came up and sniffed all round him, but he kept perfectly still and held his breath, for they say that a bear will not touch a dead body. The bear took him for a corpse, and went away. When the coast was clear, the traveller in the tree came down, and asked the other what it was the bear had whispered to him when he put his mouth to his ear. The other replied, "He told me never again to travel with a friend who deserts you at the first sign of danger."

In Other Words:

We cannot enter into alliances until we are acquainted with the designs of our neighbors. --- Sun Tzu

THE FROGS' COMPLAINT AGAINST THE SUN

Once upon a time the sun was about to take to himself a wife. The frogs in terror all raised their voices to the skies, and Jupiter, disturbed by the noise, asked them what they were croaking about. They replied, "The sun is bad enough even while he is single, drying up our marshes with his heat as he does. But what will become of us if he marries and begets other suns?

In Other Words:

Whether in an advantageous position or a disadvantageous one, the opposite state should be always present to your mind. --- Sun Tzu

THE SHEPHERD'S BOY AND THE WOLF

A shepherd's boy was tending his flock near a village, and thought it would be great fun to hoax the villagers by pretending that a wolf was attacking the sheep, so he shouted out, "Wolf ! Wolf!" and when the people came running up he laughed at them for their pains. He did this more than once, and every time the villagers found they had been hoaxed, for there was no wolf at all. At last a wolf really did come, and the boy cried, "Wolf! Wolf!" as loud as he could, but the people were so used to hearing him call that they took no notice of his cries for help. And so the wolf had it all his own way, and killed sheep after sheep at his leisure.

In Other Words:

Do not believe a person who is known to have deceived others. - Sun Tzu

THE FARMER AND HIS SONS

A farmer, being at death's door, and desiring to impart to his sons a secret of much moment, called them round him and said "My sons, I am shortly about to die. I would have you know, therefore, that in my vineyard there lies a hidden treasure. Dig, and you will find it." As soon as their father was dead, the sons took spade and fork and turned up the soil of the vineyard over and over again, in their search for the treasure which they supposed to be buried there. They found none, however, but the vines, after so thorough a digging, produced a crop such as had never before been seen.

In Other Words:

Be extremely subtle, even to the point of formlessness. Be extremely mysterious, even to the point of soundlessness. --- Sun Tzu

THE CAT AND THE COCK

A cat pounced on a cock, and cast about for some good excuse for making a meal off him, for cats don't as a rule eat cocks, and she knew she ought not to. At last she said, "You make a great nuisance of yourself at night by crowing and keeping people awake, so I am going to make an end of you." But the cock defended himself by saying that he crowed in order that men might wake up and set about the day's work in good time, and that they really couldn't very well do without him. "That may be," said the cat, "but whether they can or not, I'm not going without my dinner". and she killed and ate him.

In Other Words:

Being ruled by your emotions, exaggerating your strengths, denying your weaknesses, and wishful thinking can only lead to catastrophe. - Sun Tzu

THE HARE AND THE TORTOISE

A hare was one day making fun of a tortoise for being so slow upon his feet. "Wait a bit," said the tortoise, "I'll run a race with you, and I'll wager that I win." "Oh, well," replied the hare, who was much amused at the idea, "let's try and see"; and it was soon agreed that the fox should set a course for them, and be the judge. When the time came both started off together, but the hare was soon so far ahead that he thought he might as well have a rest, so down he lay and fell fast asleep. Meanwhile the tortoise kept plodding on, and in time reached the goal. At last the hare woke up with a start, and dashed on at his fastest, but only to find that the tortoise had already won the race.

In Other Words:

You can best predict your future by controlling it yourself, not by trusting luck or fate to control it. --- Sun Tzu

THE LION AND THE THREE BULLS

Three bulls were grazing in a meadow, and were watched by a lion, who longed to capture and devour them, but who felt that he was no match for the three so long as they kept together. So he began by false whispers and malicious hints to foment jealousies and distrust among them. This stratagem succeeded so well that ere long the bulls grew cold and unfriendly, and finally avoided each other and fed each one by himself apart. No sooner did the lion see this than he fell upon them one by one and killed them in turn.

In Other Words:

Those who win every competition are not really skillful—those who render opponents helpless without fighting are the best of all. --- Sun Tzu

THE ASS, THE COCK, AND THE LION

A ass and a cock were in a cattle-pen together. Presently a lion, who had been starving for days, came along and was just about to fall upon the ass and make a meal of him when the cock, rising to his full height and flapping his wings vigorously, uttered a tremendous crow. Now, if there is one thing that frightens a lion, it is the crowing of a cock and this one had no sooner heard the noise than he fled. The ass was mightily elated at this, and thought that, if the lion couldn't face a cock, he would be still less, likely to stand up to an ass, so he ran out and pursued him. But when the two had got well out of sight and hearing of the cock, the lion suddenly turned upon the ass and ate him up.

In Other Words:

Bravery without forethought, causes a man to fight blindly and desperately like a mad bull. --- Sun Tzu

THE LARK AND THE FARMER

A lark nested in a field of corn, and was rearing her brood under cover of the ripening grain. One day, before the young were fully fledged, the farmer came to look at the crop, and, finding it yellowing fast, he said, "I must send round word to my neighbors to come and help me reap this field." One of the young larks overheard him, and was very much frightened, and asked her mother whether they hadn't better move house at once. "There's no hurry," replied she, "a man who looks to his friends for help will take his time about a thing." In a few days the farmer came by again, and saw that the grain was over ripe and falling out of the ears upon the ground. "I must put it off no longer, he said; "this very day I'll hire the men and set them to work at once." The lark heard him and said to her young, "Come, my children, we must be off, he talks no more of his friends now, but is going to take things in hand himself."

In Other Words:

The wise person does not require too much from individuals. --- Sun Tzu

THE WOLF AND THE CRANE

A wolf once got a bone stuck in his throat. So he went to a crane and begged her to put her long bill down his throat and pull it out. "I'll make it worth your while," he added. The crane did as she was asked, and got the bone out quite easily. The wolf thanked her warmly, and was just turning away, when she cried, "What about that fee of mine ? " "Well, what about it ? " snapped the wolf, baring his teeth as he spoke ; "you can go about boasting that you once put your head into a wolf's mouth and didn't get it bitten off. What more do you want?"

In Other Words:

It is easy to love your friend, but sometimes the hardest lesson to learn is to love your enemy. --- Sun Tzu



THE TRUMPETER TAKEN PRISONER

A trumpeter marched into battle in the van of the army and put courage into his comrades by his warlike tunes. Being captured by the enemy, he begged for his life, and said, "Do not put me to death; I have killed no one, indeed, I have no weapons, but carry with me only my trumpet here." But his captors replied, "That is only the more reason why we should take your life, for, though you do not fight yourself, you stir up others to do so."

In Other Words:

In conflicts, there are not more than two methods of attack--the direct and the indirect; yet these two in combination give rise to an endless series of maneuvers. --- Sun Tzu

THE TUNNY-FISH AND THE DOLPHIN

A tunny-fish [Archaic word for tuna] was chased by a dolphin and splashed through the water at a great rate, but the dolphin gradually gained upon him, and was just about to seize him when the force of his flight carried the tunny on to a sandbank. In the heat of the chase, the dolphin followed him, and there they both lay out of the water, gasping for dear life. When the tunny saw that his enemy was doomed like himself, he said, "I don't mind having to die now :for I see that he who is the cause of my death is about to share the same fate."

In Other Words:

It is best to keep one's self intact; to crush the adversary is only second best. --- Sun Tzu

THE WOLF AND THE SHEEP

A wolf was worried and badly bitten by dogs, and lay a long time for dead. By and by he began to revive, and, feeling very hungry, called out to a passing sheep and said, "Would you kindly bring me some water from the stream close by? I can manage about meat, if only I could get something to drink." But this sheep was no fool. "I can quite understand," said he, "that if I brought you the water, you would have no difficulty about the meat. Good-morning."

In Other Words:

If you know your adversary and you know yourself, you need not fear the outcomes of one hundred confrontations. --- Sun Tzu

THE TOWN MOUSE AND THE COUNTRY MOUSE

A town mouse and a country mouse were acquaintances, and the country mouse one day invited his friend to come and see him at his home in the fields. The town mouse came, and they sat down to a dinner of barley corns and roots, the latter of which had a distinctly earthy flavor. The fare was not much to the taste of the guest, and presently he broke out with "My poor dear friend, you live here no better than the ants. Now, you should just see how I fare! My larder is a regular horn of plenty. You must come and stay with me, and I promise you you shall live on the fat of the land." So when he returned to town he took the country mouse with him, and showed him into a larder containing flour and oatmeal and figs and honey and dates. The country mouse had never seen anything like it, and sat down to enjoy the luxuries his friend provided, but before they had well begun, the door of the larder opened and someone came in. The two mice scampered off and hid themselves in a narrow and exceedingly uncomfortable hole. Presently, when all was quiet, they ventured out again; but someone else came in, and off they scuttled again. This was too much for the visitor. "Good-bye," said he, "I'm off. You live in the lap of luxury, I can see, but you are surrounded by dangers; whereas at home I can enjoy my simple dinner of roots and corn in peace."

In Other Words:

Do not interfere with someone who is returning home because a man whose heart is set on returning home will fight to the death against any attempt to bar his way. --- Sun Tzu

THE ASS IN THE LION'S SKIN

An ass found a lion's skin, and dressed himself up in it. Then he went about frightening every one he met, for they all took him to be a lion, men and beasts alike, and took to their heels when they saw him coming. Elated by the success of his trick, he loudly brayed in triumph. The fox heard him, and recognized him at once for the ass he was, and said to him, "O ho, my friend, it's you, is it? I, too, should have been afraid if I hadn't heard your voice."

In Other Words:

Perfection in conflict lies in so sapping your opponents will that they surrender without fighting. --- Sun Tzu



THE OLD LION

A lion, enfeebled by age and no longer able to procure food for himself by force, determined to do so by cunning. Betaking himself to a cave, he lay down inside and feigned to be sick. Whenever any of the other animals entered to inquire after his health, he sprang upon them and devoured them. Many lost their lives in this way, till one day a fox called at the cave, and, having a suspicion of the truth, addressed the lion from outside instead of going in, and asked him how he did. He replied that he was in a very bad way. "But", said he, "why do you stand outside ? Pray come in." "I should have done so," answered the fox, "if I hadn't noticed that all the footprints point towards the cave and none the other way."

In Other Words:

The whole secret lies in confusing the adversary, so that he cannot fathom our real intent. --- Sun Tzu

THE MOUSE, THE FROG, AND THE HAWK

A mouse and a frog struck up a friendship; they were not well mated, for the mouse lived entirely on land, while the frog was equally at home on land or in the water. In order that they might never be separated, the frog tied himself and the mouse together by the leg with a piece of thread. As long as they kept on dry land all went fairly well, but, coming to the edge of a pool, the frog jumped in, taking the mouse with him, and began swimming about and croaking with pleasure. The unhappy mouse, however, was soon drowned, and floated about on the surface in the wake of the frog. There he was spied by a hawk, who pounced down on him and seized him in his talons. The frog was unable to loose the knot which bound him to the mouse, and thus was carried off along with him and eaten by the hawk.

In Other Words:

Recklessness leads to destruction. --- Sun Tzu



THE FROGS ASKING FOR A KING

Time was when the frogs were discontented because they had no one to rule over them, so they sent a deputation to Jupiter to ask him to give them a king. Jupiter, despising the folly of their request, cast a log into the pool where they lived, and said that that should be their king. The frogs were terrified at first by the splash, and scuttled away into the deepest parts of the pool, but by and by, when they saw that the log remained motionless, one by one they ventured to the surface again, and before long, growing bolder, they began to feel such contempt for it that they even took to sitting upon it. Thinking that a king of that sort was an insult to their dignity, they sent to Jupiter a second time, and begged him to take away the sluggish king he had given them, and to give them another and a better one. Jupiter, annoyed at being pestered in this way, sent a stork to rule over them, who no sooner arrived among them than he began to catch and eat the frogs as fast as he could.

In Other Words:

The opportunity to secure ourselves against defeat lies in our own hands
--- Sun Tzu

THE FOX WITHOUT A TAIL

A fox once fell into a trap, and after a struggle managed to get free, but with the loss of his brush. He was then so much ashamed of his appearance that he thought life was not worth living unless he could persuade the other foxes to part with their tails also, and thus divert attention from his own loss. So he called a meeting of all the foxes, and advised them to cut off their tails. "They're ugly things anyhow", he said, "and besides they're heavy, and it's tiresome to be always carrying them about with you." But one of the other foxes said, "My friend, if you hadn't lost your own tail, you wouldn't be so keen on getting us to cut off ours."

In Other Words:

You can ensure the safety of your defense if you only hold positions that cannot be attacked. --- Sun Tzu



THE FOX AND THE LION

A fox who had never seen a lion one day met one and was so terrified at the sight of him that he was ready to die with fear. After a time he met him again, and was still rather frightened, but not nearly so much as he had been when he met him first. But when he saw him for the third time he was so far from being afraid that he went up to him and began to talk to him as if he had known him all his life.

In Other Words:

The worst calamities arise from hesitation. --- Sun Tzu

THE FAWN AND HIS MOTHER

A hind said to her fawn, who was now well grown and strong, "My son, Nature has given you a powerful body and a stout pair of horns, and I can't think why you are such a coward as to run away from the hounds. Just then they both heard the sound of a pack in full cry, but at a considerable distance. "You stay where you are," said the hind, "never mind me" and with that she ran off as fast as her legs could carry her.

In Other Words:

Learn to be invisible, learn to be inaudible, and hence we can hold the adversary's fate in our hands. --- Sun Tzu

THE CAT AND THE COCK

A cat pounced on a cock, and cast about for some good excuse for making a meal off him, for cats don't as a rule eat cocks, and she knew she ought not to. At last she said, "You make a great nuisance of yourself at night by crowing and keeping people awake, so I am going to make an end of you." But the cock defended himself by saying that he crowed in order that men might wake up and set about the day's work in good time, and that they really couldn't very well do without him. "That may be," said the cat, "but whether they can or not, I'm not going without my dinner" and she killed and ate him.

In Other Words:

The covetous person is quick at seizing advantages. --- Sun Tzu



THE WOLF AND THE GOAT

A wolf caught sight of a goat browsing above him on the scanty herbage that grew on the top of a steep rock and being unable to get at her, tried to induce her to come lower down. "You are risking your life up there, madam, indeed you are, he called out, "pray take my advice and come down here, where you will find plenty of better food." The goat turned a knowing eye upon him. "It's little you care whether I get good grass or bad," said she "what you want is to eat me".

In Other Words:

*The whole secret lies in confusing confusing your opponent,
so that he cannot fathom your real intent. --- Sun Tzu*

THE SHEEP AND THE DOG

Once upon a time the sheep complained to the shepherd about the difference in his treatment of themselves and his dog. "Your conduct," said they, "is very strange and, we think, very unfair. We provide you with wool and lambs and milk and you give us nothing but grass, and even that we have to find for ourselves, but you get nothing at all from the dog, and yet you feed him with tit-bits from your own table." Their remarks were over-heard by the dog, who spoke up at once and said, "Yes, and quite right, too. Where would you be if it wasn't for me? Thieves would steal you! Wolves would eat you! Indeed, if I didn't keep constant watch over you, you would be too terrified even to graze!" The sheep were obliged to acknowledge that he spoke the truth, and never again made a grievance of the regard in which he was held by his master.

In Other Words:

Rewards for good service should not be deferred a single day. – Sun Tzu

THE LION IN LOVE

A lion fell deeply in love with the daughter of a cottager and wanted to marry her, but her father was unwilling to give her to so fearsome a husband, and yet didn't want to offend the lion so he hit upon the following expedient: He went to the lion and said,

"I think you will make a very good husband for my daughter, but I cannot consent to your union unless you let me draw your teeth and pare your nails, for my daughter is terribly afraid of them." The lion was so much in love that he readily agreed that this should be done. When once, however, he was thus disarmed, the cottager was afraid of him no longer, but drove him away with his club.

In Other Words:

*Supreme excellence consists of breaking the
adversary's resistance without fighting. --- Sun Tzu*

THE OLD MAN AND DEATH

An old man cut himself a bundle of faggots in a wood and started to carry them home. He had a long way to go, and was tired out before he had got much more than half-way. Casting his burden on the ground, he called upon Death to come and release him from his life of toil. The words were scarcely out of his mouth when, much to his dismay, Death stood before him and professed his readiness to serve him. He was almost frightened out of his wits, but he had enough presence of mind to stammer out, "Good sir, if you'd be so kind, pray help me up with my burden again."

In Other Words:

In the midst of chaos, there is also opportunity. --- Sun Tzu

THE HORSE AND THE ASS

A horse, proud of his fine harness, met an ass on the high-road. As the ass with his heavy burden moved slowly out of the way to let him pass, the horse cried out impatiently that he could hardly resist kicking him to make him move faster. The ass held his peace, but did not forget the other's insolence. Not long afterwards the horse became broken-winded, and was sold by his owner to a farmer. One day, as he was drawing a dung-cart, he met the ass again, who in turn derided him and said, "Aha! you never thought to come to this, did you, you who were so proud! Where are all your gay trappings now?"

In Other Words:

Even the finest sword plunged into salt water will eventually rust.
--- Sun Tzu

The Bear and The Beehives

A bear searching for berries happened on a several beehives at a farm. The bear began to sniff around the hives to see if the bees were at home. Just then one of the swarm came home from the field and flew at the bear and stung him. The bear got angry in an instant and set about to destroy the hive. But this only brought out the entire swarm. The bear ran away without getting any honey.

In Other Words:

A hasty temper leads to destruction. --- Sun Tzu

APPENDIX FIVE

Updated, Vintage Recipes of 12th Century Moorish Spain
from The Archives of Dawn Corleone



Dawn Corleone is our pen name for the artificial intelligence
which wrote the source material: *squibler.io*
and *google.com*

Ajoblanco (White Gazpacho)

What You Need

- 1 cup blanched, whole almonds
- 2 to 3 cloves fresh garlic
- 1 cup white country bread (crusts removed)
- 3 tbsp quality sherry vinegar
- ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 cups cold water
- Grapes or melon (to serve)

Directions

1. Soak the bread in a little water for 5 minutes.
2. Add the almonds, garlic, and soaked bread into a food processor.
3. Blend until it becomes a thick, sticky paste.
4. Slowly pour in the olive oil and vinegar while blending.
5. Add the cold water until it reaches a smooth, creamy soup texture.
6. Season with salt. Chill in your fridge for at least 2 hours.
7. Serve cold, topped with sweet grapes or sliced melon

Al-Rāhibī (Moorish Spiced Chicken)

This dish relies on **pomegranate molasses** and aromatic spices to create a sweet, sour, and richly flavored main course.

What You Need

- 1 lb boneless, skinless chicken thighs
- 8 oz pearl onions (peeled)
- ½ cup olive oil
- 1 tbsp pomegranate molasses
- ½ tsp cinnamon, ginger, and saffron
- ½ tsp coriander, salt, and black pepper

Directions

1. Mix the chicken with all your spices, salt, and half the olive oil. Let it sit for 30 minutes.
2. Heat the rest of your olive oil in a large heavy pot.
3. Brown the chicken thighs on both sides.
4. Add the pearl onions and cook until soft.
5. Add the pomegranate molasses and ¼ cup of water.
6. Cover the pot. Simmer gently on low heat for 25 minutes until the chicken is tender

Jubn Maqlī (Fried Honey Cheese)

This decadent dessert shows off the Moorish love for combining warm dairy with sticky sweetness.

What You Need

- 8 oz firm, mild white cheese (such as a mild goat cheese or halloumi)
- 3 tbsp wheat flour
- ½ cup olive oil (for frying)
- ¼ cup high-quality honey
- Pinch of ground cinnamon

Directions

1. Slice your cheese into ½ inch thick slabs.
2. Lightly dust each piece of cheese with flour.
3. Heat your olive oil in a skillet.
4. Fry the cheese until it is golden brown on both sides.
5. Remove the cheese to a plate.
6. Drizzle warm honey over the cheese and sprinkle with cinnamon. Serve immediately.

Al-Būrāniyya (Al-Andalus Eggplant Dip)

Named after a famous Abbasid princess, this rich appetizer showcases the Moorish introduction of eggplant to Spain. It is the medieval ancestor of modern Mediterranean dips.

What You Need:

- 2 large eggplants
- 3 cloves garlic (crushed)
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 tbsp plain Greek yogurt
- 1 tsp ground cumin and coriander
- Salt and black pepper

Directions

1. Poke holes in the eggplants with a fork. Roast them at 400°F (200°C) for 40 minutes until completely soft.
2. Let them cool. Scoop the soft flesh out of the skin.
3. Mash the eggplant flesh with a fork or pulse briefly in a food processor.
4. Stir in the garlic, olive oil, yogurt, cumin, and coriander.
5. Season with salt and pepper. Serve cold or at room temperature with bread.

Khubz al-Abāshī (Saffron Court Flatbread)

Moorish elite tables featured breads lightly spiced with luxury ingredients like saffron and anise. This flatbread is perfect for scooping up dips and savory sauces.

What You Need

- 3 cups unbleached all-purpose flour
- 1 packet (2¼ tsp) active dry yeast
- 1 cup warm water
- 1 large pinch of saffron threads
- 1 tsp ground anise seed
- 1 tsp salt
- 2 tbsp olive oil

Directions

1. Crush the saffron into your warm water and let it steep for 5 minutes until the water turns golden.
2. Mix the flour, yeast, anise seed, and salt in a bowl.
3. Pour in the saffron water and olive oil. Knead into a smooth dough.
4. Cover the dough. Let it rise for 1 hour until doubled in size.
5. Divide into 4 balls. Roll each into a ¼ inch thick circle.
6. Bake on a hot baking stone or skillet at 450°F (230°C) for 5 to 7 minutes until puffed.

Zanahorias Aliñadas (Moorish Marinated Carrots)

The Moors brought new sweet varieties of carrots to Europe. This acidic, spiced side dish is perfect for balancing heavy meat mains

What You Need

- 1 lb carrots (peeled and sliced into thick rounds)
- 3 tbsp sherry vinegar
- 3 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic (crushed into a paste)
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- ½ tsp sweet Spanish paprika
- Coarse salt

Directions

Boil the carrot slices in salted water for 8 to 10 minutes until tender but still firm to the bite. Drain them well.

1. While the carrots are warm, whisk the sherry vinegar, olive oil, crushed garlic, cumin, oregano, paprika, and salt in a bowl.
2. Toss the warm carrots into the marinade so they absorb the flavors.
3. Let them marinate in the refrigerator for at least 4 hours (or overnight). Serve chilled

Muwarraqa (Layered Almond Pastry)

This recipe is a direct ancestor of modern Spanish *hojaldre* and Moroccan *pastilla*. It uses layered pastry dough filled with sweet, fragrant nut pastes.

What You Need

- 1 package phyllo dough (thawed)
- 1 ½ cups ground almonds
- ½ cup honey
- 2 tbsp orange blossom water
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- ½ cup melted unsalted butter (or ghee)

Directions

1. Mix the ground almonds, honey, orange blossom water, and cinnamon into a thick paste.
2. Layer 6 sheets of phyllo dough in a baking dish, brushing butter between each sheet.
3. Spread your sweet almond paste evenly over the dough.
4. Top with 6 more sheets of phyllo, brushing butter between each layer.
5. Score the top layers into diamonds. Bake at 350°F (175°C) for 30 minutes until golden.
6. Drizzle with extra warm honey and dust with cinnamon before serving.

Sautéed Zucchini with Almond-Egg Topping

The Moorish courts loved topping vegetable dishes with rich nut and egg combinations to create a sophisticated texture contrast.

What You Need

- 3 medium zucchinis (sliced into rounds)
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 cloves garlic (minced)
- 1/3 cup blanched almonds (finely ground)
- 2 large eggs (beaten)
- ½ tsp ground cumin and coriander
- Salt and black pepper

Directions

1. Heat the olive oil in a wide skillet over medium heat.
2. Sauté the garlic and zucchini slices until the zucchini is tender and lightly browned.
3. Whisk the ground almonds, beaten eggs, cumin, coriander, salt, and pepper together in a small bowl.
4. Pour the egg-almond mixture directly over the hot zucchini in the skillet.
5. Stir gently for 1 to 2 minutes until the egg topping softly sets and coats the zucchini. Serve hot.

Bişāra (Moorish Fava Bean Breakfast Porridge)

This slow-cooked, hearty porridge dates back to the 10th-13th Century Andalusí cookbooks. It remains a legendary breakfast across North Africa and Southern Spain today.

What You Need

- 2 cups dried skinless fava beans (broad beans), soaked overnight
- 4 cups water or vegetable broth
- 5 cloves garlic (peeled)
- 1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tbsp ground cumin
- 1 tsp ground coriander
- Salt and cayenne pepper (to taste)

Directions

1. Drain the soaked fava beans and place them in a large pot with the water, garlic cloves, and a pinch of salt.
2. Bring to a boil, then skim any foam off the top. Reduce heat to low, cover, and simmer for 1 hour until the beans mash easily.
3. Use an immersion blender to puree the mixture into a thick, smooth, velvety porridge.
4. Stir in the ground cumin, coriander, and half of the olive oil.
5. Ladle into warm bowls. Drizzle generously with the remaining olive oil and dust with extra cumin and cayenne.

Serve hot with flatbread

Stuffed Dates with Spiced Almond Paste

A quick, elegant, and high-energy afternoon luxury enjoyed by Andalusian elites.

What You Need

- 12 large, plump Medjool dates
- ½ cup finely ground almonds
- ½ tbsp honey
- ½ tsp ground cinnamon
- A few drops of rose water

Directions

1. Slit the dates open lengthwise and remove the pits.
2. In a small bowl, mix the ground almonds, honey, cinnamon, and rose water together until it forms a thick, moldable paste.
3. Roll small pinches of the almond paste into log shapes that fit inside the dates.
4. Stuff each date with the almond mixture.
5. Dust the tops lightly with a pinch of extra cinnamon before serving alongside fresh mint tea.

Poleá / Gachas Dulces (Anise & Honey Breakfast Cream)

A decadent, sweet morning porridge of Andalusian-Moorish heritage. It utilizes warm spices and fried bread croutons to create a cozy, comforting meal.

What You Need

- 4 cups milk
- 4 tbsp all-purpose flour
- 5 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tbsp anise seeds
- Strip of fresh lemon peel
- 1/3 cup honey (or sugar)
- 1 cup stale bread (cut into tiny cubes)
- Ground cinnamon

Directions

1. Heat the olive oil in a skillet over medium heat. Fry your bread cubes until golden brown and crispy. Remove the croutons and set aside.
2. In the same oil, add the anise seeds and lemon peel. Fry for 2 minutes until aromatic, then strain the oil into a clean saucepan to discard the seeds and peel.
3. Stir the flour into the warm, flavored oil over low heat, cooking for 2 minutes to remove the raw flour taste.
4. Gradually whisk in the milk to avoid lumps. Add your honey (or sugar) and a pinch of salt.
5. Cook, stirring continuously, until the mixture thickens into a smooth, creamy custard.
6. Pour into bowls, top with the crispy fried bread croutons, drizzle with extra honey, and dust heavily with cinnamon.



Isfiriya de Pescado (Moorish Citrus-Herb Fish Cakes)

Midday meals in Al-Andalus often featured lighter proteins like white fish, seasoned with fresh garden herbs and finished with a bright splash of citrus juice.

What You Need

- 1 lb white fish fillets (like cod, haddock, or tilapia)
- 2 large eggs (beaten)
- ½ cup breadcrumbs
- ½ cup fresh cilantro and flat-leaf parsley (finely minced)
- 1 tsp ground ginger and coriander
- ½ tsp ground cumin and black pepper
- Salt to taste
- Olive oil (for frying)
- Fresh lemon juice (to finish)

Directions

1. Poach or steam the fish until cooked through. Drain well and flake it finely into a bowl.
2. Stir in the minced herbs, ginger, coriander, cumin, black pepper, and salt.
3. Add the beaten eggs and breadcrumbs. Mix thoroughly until the mixture holds its shape. Add the beaten eggs and breadcrumbs. Mix thoroughly until the mixture holds its shape.
4. Form into small, flat patties.
5. Heat a generous layer of olive oil in a skillet over medium-high heat.
6. Fry the cakes for 3 to 4 minutes per side until deeply golden and crispy.
7. Squeeze fresh lemon juice over the hot fish cakes immediately before serving.



Edible Plates: Khubz Sha'ir (Rustic Barley Flatbread Trenchers)

Wheat was often taxed or sold as a cash crop, so peasants regularly baked dense flatbreads using hardy barley or fava bean flour. These doubled as *trenchers*—edible plates used to scoop up daily stews.

What You Need

- 2 cups barley flour (or a 50/50 mix of barley and whole wheat flour)
- 1 tsp salt
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup warm water
- 1 tbsp olive oil

Directions

1. Mix the flour and salt together in a large bowl.
2. Gradually pour in the warm water and **olive oil**, stirring until a stiff dough forms.
3. Knead the dough on a lightly floured surface for 5 minutes until smooth.
4. Divide the dough into 4 equal portions and roll each out into a thick, flat circle (about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick).
5. Heat a dry, heavy cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat.
6. Cook each flatbread for 3 to 4 minutes on each side until charred spots appear and the bread is cooked through. Let them cool slightly to harden into sturdy "plates."



Tharīd (Moorish Lamb and Bread Stew)

The *Tharīd* was considered a princely dish across the Islamic world, famously favored by the elite classes for an upscale midday feast. It features tender meat layered over torn bread to soak up the rich, spiced broth.

What You Need

- 1 lb lamb shoulder (cut into bite-sized cubes)
- 1 large onion (chopped)
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon and ginger
- ½ tsp saffron threads (crushed)
- 3 cups beef or vegetable broth
- 2 large eggs
- Stale flatbread (or leftover *Khubz*)

Directions

1. Heat olive oil in a heavy pot. Brown the lamb cubes and onion over medium heat.
2. Stir in the cinnamon, ginger, saffron, salt, and black pepper.
3. Pour in the broth. Bring to a boil, then lower the heat, cover, and simmer for 1 hour until the lamb is meltingly tender.
4. Whisk the two eggs in a bowl. Slowly ladle a cup of the hot broth into the eggs to temper them, then stir the egg mixture back into the stew for 2 minutes to thicken it into a silky sauce.
5. Tear your stale flatbread into bite-sized pieces and line the bottom of your serving bowls.
6. Spoon the hot lamb and rich broth directly over the bread so it softens and absorbs the soup.



Afternoon Snacks (Al-'Asriyya)

Zalābiya (Moorish Honey-Drenched Fritters)

These crispy, golden pastry coils were a beloved marketplace and palace snack, legal documents from medieval Seville even mention strict regulations for the vendors who fried them!

What You Need

- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 2 tbsp cornstarch
- ½ tsp active dry yeast
- ¾ cup warm water
- Pinch of saffron
- Olive oil or vegetable oil (for deep frying)
- ½ cup honey heated with 1 tbsp orange blossom water

Directions

1. Whisk the flour, cornstarch, yeast, and saffron in a bowl. Add the warm water and mix into a smooth batter (similar to pancake batter).
2. Cover and let the batter ferment for 45 to 60 minutes until bubbles form on top.
3. Pour the batter into a squeeze bottle or a plastic bag with a tiny corner snipped off.
4. Heat oil in a deep pan to 350°F (175°C).
5. Squeeze the batter into the hot oil in interlocking swirls, spirals, or circles.
6. Fry for 1 to 2 minutes per side until crispy and light golden.
7. Remove with a slotted spoon and drop the hot fritter directly into the warm honey and orange blossom water mixture for 30 seconds. Serve warm.



Daily Soup: Tarfida (Cracked Wheat and Wild Greens Pottage)

Peasants ate various forms of pottage daily. This filling, rustic soup uses cracked wheat (bulgur) to stretch out seasonal garden vegetables and gathered wild greens.

What You Need

- 1 cup coarse bulgur wheat (or cracked wheat)
- 4 cups water or vegetable broth
- 1 large onion (chopped)
- 3 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- 4 cups packed wild greens (such as dandelion greens, chard, turnip greens, or spinach)
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- Salt and black pepper

Directions

1. Heat the olive oil in a large pot and sauté the chopped onion until soft.
2. Pour in the water or broth and bring it to a boil.
3. Stir in the bulgur wheat, reduce heat to low, cover, and simmer for 15 minutes.
4. Wash and roughly chop your greens, then stir them into the pot along with the cumin, salt, and pepper.
5. Cook uncovered for another 10 minutes until the greens are tender and the soup is thick and porridge-like. Serve warm with crusty barley bread.



Celebratory Upgrades (Al-A'yād)

Festival Main: Peasant Isfīriyā (Spiced Chickpea and Herb Fritters)

For a wedding or seasonal harvest festival, peasants upgraded cheap legumes into a celebratory treat by deep-frying them in fresh olive oil. This is a direct 12th Century Andalusí ancestor to modern falafel.

What You Need

- 2 cups cooked chickpeas (well-drained)
- 1 small onion (finely chopped)
- ½ cup fresh flat-leaf parsley (finely chopped)
- 2 cloves garlic (minced)
- 1 tbsp flour (barley or wheat)
- 1 tsp ground coriander and cumin
- ½ tsp baking soda (modern substitute for yeast leavening)
- Salt to taste
- Olive oil (for shallow or deep frying)

Directions

1. Place the chickpeas, onion, parsley, garlic, **coriander, cumin**, and salt into a food processor. Pulse until finely ground but not pureed into a paste.
2. Stir in the flour and baking soda. Let the mixture rest for 15 minutes.
3. Form the mixture into small, slightly flattened balls or patties.
4. Heat a generous layer of **olive oil** in a deep skillet over medium-high heat.
5. Fry the fritters in batches for 3 to 4 minutes, turning once, until they develop a deep golden, crispy crust. Drain on towels and serve hot.



Holiday Sweet: Melcocha (Boiled Grape-Must or Honey Toffee)

Sugar was a luxury controlled by the state and wealthy estates. For celebrations, peasant families substituted sugar with concentrated grape-must syrup (*arrope*) or wild honey boiled down to make simple, sticky pulled candies.

What You Need

- 1 cup high-quality dark honey (or 1 cup grape molasses/*arrope*)
- 1 tsp anise seeds (optional)
- Toasted sesame seeds (for rolling)

Directions

1. Pour the honey or grape molasses into a small saucepan and add the anise seeds.
2. Bring to a gentle boil over medium-low heat, stirring constantly.
3. Cook for about 8 to 10 minutes, or until the syrup reaches the "soft crack stage" (around 270°F / 132°C if using a candy thermometer). If you drop a bit into ice water, it should form hard but pliable threads.
4. Pour the hot syrup carefully onto a greased heat-safe plate or silicone mat.
5. Let it cool just enough so you can handle it. Grease your hands with olive oil, pick up the candy, and pull and stretch it repeatedly until it becomes opaque and changes color.
6. Twist it into a long rope, cut it into bite-sized pieces with greased shears, and roll the pieces in toasted sesame seeds. Let them cool completely to harden.



Middle-Class Breads (Al-Akhhbāz)

Khubbz al-Khamīr (Traditional Sourdough Market Loaf)

While peasants ate flat barley bread, the urban middle class bought high-quality wheat flour to bake tall, leavened sourdough loaves at home, which they then brought to the neighborhood communal oven (*furn*) to be baked ?

What You Need

- 3½ cups unbleached bread flour
- 1¼ cups warm water
- ½ cup active sourdough starter (or 1 tsp active dry yeast as a modern shortcut)
- 1½ tsp salt
- 1 tsp black cumin seeds (Nigella seeds, traditionally used to top urban loaves)

Directions

1. Mix the flour, salt, and **black cumin seeds** in a large bowl.
2. Add the warm water and sourdough starter (or yeast). Knead for 10 minutes until a smooth, elastic dough forms.
3. Shape the dough into a round, slightly domed loaf.
4. Place it on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper, cover it with a cloth, and let it rise for 2 to 3 hours (longer if using sourdough) until doubled in size.
5. Cut a shallow cross or diamond pattern onto the top of the loaf with a sharp knife.

Bake at 425°F (220°C) for 30 to 35 minutes until the crust is deep golden brown and the bottom sounds hollow when tapped.



Musammana (Flaky Laminated Griddle Bread)

This layered, flaky bread required time and skill rather than expensive ingredients, making it an absolute favorite for middle-class afternoon snacks or breakfasts.

What You Need

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- ½ cup fine semolina flour
- 1 tsp salt
- Approx. 1 cup warm water
- ½ cup melted ghee (clarified butter) or olive oil (for layering)

Directions

1. Combine the flour, semolina, and salt. Gradually add water and knead for 10 minutes until smooth and pliable.
2. Divide the dough into 4 balls. Let them rest, covered, for 15 minutes.
3. Grease your work surface with the melted ghee or oil. Take one ball and roll/stretch it with your hands until it is paper-thin and translucent.
4. Brush the surface generously with more ghee or oil, then sprinkle a pinch of dry semolina over it.
5. Fold the top third down, then the bottom third up (like a letter). Brush with oil again, then fold the left and right sides inward to create a neat square package. Repeat for all balls.
6. Flatten each square slightly with your hands.
7. Fry in a hot, lightly greased skillet over medium heat for 3 to 4 minutes on each side until puffed, flaky, and golden brown.



Middle-Class Desserts (Al-Ḥalwiyyāt)

Isfīriya al-Jubn (Fried Cheese and Sugar Fritters)

This dish adapts the elite love for complex pastries into a quick, accessible, and decadent sweet treat that middle-class families made for guests.

What You Need

- 1 cup fresh ricotta cheese (or finely crumbled mild goat cheese)
- 1 large egg
- 3 tbsp all-purpose flour
- ½ tsp ground cinnamon
- Olive oil (for shallow frying)
- 1/3 cup white sugar or honey
- 1 tsp rose water

Directions

1. In a bowl, vigorously mix the cheese, egg, flour, and cinnamon together until a smooth, uniform batter forms.
2. Heat a ½ inch layer of olive oil in a frying pan over medium heat.
3. Drop tablespoons of the batter into the hot oil. Fry for 2 to 3 minutes on each side until puffed and beautifully golden.
4. Remove with a slotted spoon and drain briefly on a towel.
5. Toss the warm fritters directly in sugar mixed with a splash of rose water (or drizzle with rose-scented honey) and serve immediately.



Kabişa (Almond and Semolina Halva pudding)

Middle-class kitchens used semolina and ground almonds to stretch out precious sweeteners like honey or sugar into a thick, aromatic, fudge-like dessert.

What You Need

- 1 cup fine semolina flour
- ½ cup finely ground almonds
- ½ cup honey (or sugar)
- ½ cup water
- 4 tbsp unsalted butter or olive oil
- 1 tbsp orange blossom water
- Ground cinnamon and toasted pine nuts (to garnish)

Directions

1. Melt the butter or oil in a saucepan over medium-low heat. Add the semolina and stir constantly for 8 to 10 minutes until it smells toasted and turns lightly golden.
2. Stir the ground almonds into the semolina and cook for 2 more minutes.
3. In a separate small pot, heat the water, honey, and orange blossom water until completely dissolved.
4. Carefully pour the hot syrup into the toasted semolina mixture while stirring continuously.
5. Lower the heat and cook for 3 to 5 minutes, stirring vigorously, until the mixture thickens into a dense paste that pulls away from the sides of the pan.
6. Spoon the warm mixture into small bowls or press it into a shallow dish to cool and slice into squares. Garnish with cinnamon and toasted pine nuts.



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