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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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## Robin Hood: Robin Hood And The Butcher (8/10)

It happened one day when Robin Hood was in the forest that he saw a jolly butcher with a fine mare, who was going to market to sell his meat.

"Good morrow, good fellow, what food have you there?" said Robin. "Tell me what is your trade, and where you live, for I like the look of you."

"No matter where I live," answered the man. "I am a butcher, and I am going to Nottingham to sell my flesh."

"What's the price of your flesh?" said Robin. "And tell me, too, the price of your mare, however dear she may be, for I would fain be a butcher."

"Oh, I'll soon tell you the price of my flesh," replied the butcher.

"For that, with my bonny mare, and they are not at all dear, you must give me four marks."

Robin Hood agreed at once to the bargain.

"I will give you four marks. Here is the money; come, count it, and hand me over the goods at once, for I want to be a butcher."



So the man took the money, and Robin took the mare and the cart of meat, and went on to Nottingham to begin his new trade. He had a plan in his mind, and in order to carry it out he went to the sheriff's house, which was an inn, and took up his lodging there.

When the butchers opened their shops Robin boldly opened his, but he did not in the least know how to sell, for he had never done anything of the kind before. In spite of this, however, or rather because of it, while all the other butchers could sell no meat Robin had plenty of customers, and money came in quickly. The reason of this was that Robin gave more meat for one penny than others could do for three. Robin therefore sold off his meat very fast, but none of the butchers near could thrive.

This made them notice the stranger who was taking away all their custom, and they began to wonder who he was, and where he came from. "This must be surely some prodigal, who has sold his father's land, and is squandering away his money," they said to each other. They went up to Robin to get acquainted with him.

"Come, brother, we are all of one trade," said one of them; "will you go dine with us?"

"By all means," answered Robin, "I will go with you as fast as I can, my brave comrades." So off they hastened to the sheriff's house, where dinner was served at once, and Robin was chosen to sit at the head of the table and say grace.

"Come, fill us more wine; let us be merry while we are here," he cried. "I'll pay the reckoning for the wine and

good cheer however dear it may be. Come, brothers, be merry. I'll pay the score, I vow, before I go, if it costs me five pounds or more."

"This is a mad blade," said the butchers, but they laughed and made haste to eat and drink well at Robin's expense.

Now the sheriff, who was of a very shrewd and grasping nature, had not failed to remark this handsome young butcher lad who was so very lavish of his money, and who sold his meat in the market so much cheaper than any one else. If there were good bargains to be made he determined to make his own profit out of them. "He is some prodigal," he said to himself, "who has sold land, and now means to spend all the money he has got for it." If Robin were able to sell his meat so cheap it occurred to the sheriff that probably he possessed a great deal of cattle, and would most likely be ready to part with them for a very low price.

"Hark'ee, good fellow, have you any horned beasts you can sell me?" he asked in a lordly way.

"Yes, that I have, good master sheriff, two or three hundred," answered Robin. "And I have a hundred acres of good free land, if it would please you to see it. I'll hand it over to you as securely as ever my father did to me."

The sheriff, quite pleased to think of the fine bargain he was likely to make, saddled his palfrey, and taking three hundred pounds in gold in his portmanteau, went off with Robin Hood to see his horned beasts. Away they rode till they came to the forest of Sherwood,

and then the sheriff began to look about him in some alarm.

"God preserve us this day from a man they call Robin Hood," he said earnestly.

When they had gone a little further Robin Hood chanced to spy a hundred head of good fat deer, who came tripping quite close.

"How like you my horned beasts, good master sheriff? They are fat and fair to see, are they not?"

"I tell you, good fellow, I would I were gone, for I like not your company," said the sheriff, now very ill at ease.

Robin set his horn to his mouth, and blew three blasts, and immediately Little John and all his company came flocking up.

"What is your will, master?" asked Little John.

"I have brought hither the Sheriff of Nottingham to dine with thee to-day."

"He is welcome," said Little John; "I hope he will pay honestly. I know he has gold enough, if it is properly reckoned, to serve us with wine for a whole day."

Robin took off his mantle and laid it on the ground and from the sheriff's portmanteau he counted out three hundred pounds in gold. Then he led him through the forest, set him on his dapple-grey palfrey, and sent him back to his own home.