



Ririro

READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

Robin Hood (Chapter Book)

Mary Macleod

- Chapter 1: Robin Hood And The Knight
 - Chapter 2: Little John And The Sheriff Of Nottingham
 - Chapter 3: How Robin Hood Was Paid His Loan
 - Chapter 4: The Golden Arrow
 - Chapter 5: How The Sheriff Took Sir Richard Prisoner
 - Chapter 6: How The King Came To Sherwood Forest
 - Chapter 7: How Robin Hood Went Back To The Greenwood
 - Chapter 8: Robin Hood And The Butcher
 - Chapter 9: The Jolly Tanner
 - Chapter 10: How Robin Hood Drew His Bow For The Last Time
-

Chapter 1: Robin Hood And The Knight

In the days of Richard I there lived a famous outlaw who was known by the name of Robin Hood. He was born at Locksley in the county of Nottingham, and was of noble origin, for he is often spoken of as "Earl of Huntingdon." Robin was very wild and daring, and having placed his life in danger by some reckless act, or possibly through some political offence, he fled for refuge to the greenwood. His chief haunts were Sherwood Forest in Nottinghamshire, and Barnsdale in Yorkshire. Round him soon flocked a band of trusty followers. An old chronicler states that Robin Hood "entertained an hundred tall men and good archers." They robbed none but the rich, and killed no man except in self-defence. Robin "suffered no woman to be oppressed or otherwise molested; poor men's goods he spared, abundantly relieving them" with spoils got from abbeys or the houses of rich people.

Robin Hood's exploits were widely known, and although the poorer classes were all on his side, those in authority were naturally incensed against him. Many attempts were made to seize him, and large rewards were offered for his capture. He was often in danger of his life, and had many narrow escapes, but so daring was his courage, and so quick and clever his wit and resource that he always contrived to get clear away.

An old tradition says that the father of Robin was a forester, a renowned archer. On one occasion he shot for a wager against the three gallant yeomen of the north country—Adam Bell, Clym-of-the-Clough, and William of Cloudesly, and the forester beat all three of them.

The mother of Robin Hood was a niece of the famous Guy, Earl of Warwick, who slew the blue boar; her brother was Gamwel of Great Gamwel Hall, a squire of famous degree, and the owner of one of the finest houses in Nottinghamshire. When the other outlaws flocked to Robin Hood they begged him to tell them what sort of life they were to lead, and where they were to go, what they were to take and what to leave, what sort of people they were to rob, and whom they were to beat and to bind—in short, how they were to act in every circumstance.

"Have no fear, we shall do very well," answered Robin. "But look you do no harm to any husbandman that tilleth with his plough, nor to any good yeoman that walketh in the greenwood, nor to any knight or squire who is a good fellow. And harm no folk in whose company is any woman.

"But fat rascals, and all who have got rich by pilfering, canting, and cheating, those you may beat and bind, and hold captive for ransom. And chiefly the Sheriff of Nottingham—look you, bear him well in mind."

And his followers promised to pay heed to his words, and carry them out carefully.

Chief among the band of outlaws known as "Robin Hood's merry men" was "Little John," so called because his name was John Little, and he was seven feet high. Robin Hood was about twenty years old when he first came to know Little John, and they got acquainted in this way. Robin was walking one day in the forest when coming near a brook he chanced to spy a stranger, a strong lusty lad like himself. The two met in the middle of a long narrow bridge, and neither would give way. They quarrelled as to which should be the master, and finally agreed to fight with stout staves on the bridge, and whichever fell into the water the other was to be declared to have won. The encounter was a stiff one, but finally the stranger knocked down Robin Hood, and tumbled him into the brook. Robin bore no malice, but owned at once the other had got the best of it, and seeing what a stout nimble fellow he was, persuaded him to join his band of archers, and go and live with them in the greenwood.

Next to Little John the chief man was Will Scarlet, who in reality was Robin's own cousin or nephew, young Gamwel of Gamwel Hall. Having slain his father's steward either by accident or in some brawl, young Will fled to his kinsman, Robin Hood, in Sherwood Forest, where, as in the case of Little John, he first made his acquaintance by fighting with him. As young Will on this occasion happened to be dressed very smartly in silken doublet and scarlet stockings

Robin Hood dubbed him "Will Scarlet," by which name he was always afterwards known.

Besides these two famous outlaws there were many others of lesser note who from time to time joined the band. Among them may be mentioned "Gilbert of the white hand" who was almost as good an archer as Robin himself; Allen-a-Dale, whose bride Robin Hood helped him to secure; Much, the son of a miller; George-a-Green; Friar Tuck; Will Stutely, who was taken prisoner by the Sheriff of Nottingham and nearly hanged, but was rescued from the gallows by the gallant yeomen; Arthur-a-Bland, the sturdy tanner of Nottingham, who beat Robin when they fought with staves; the jolly tinker of Banbury who went out to arrest Robin, but ended by joining his band, and the chief ranger of Sherwood Forest, who did the same.

Lastly, there was the bonny maid of noble degree, who was known in the north country as Maid Marian. She had loved Robin Hood when they were young together, in the days when he was still the Earl of Huntingdon, but spiteful fortune forced them to part. Robin had to fly for refuge to the greenwood, and Maid Marian, unable to live without him, dressed herself like a page, with quiver and bow, sword and buckler, and went in search of him. Long and wearily she ranged the forest, and when the lovers met they did not know each other, for Robin, too, had been obliged to disguise himself. They fought as foes, and so sore was the fray that both were wounded, but Robin so much admired the valour of the stranger lad that he bade him stay his hand, and asked him to join his company. When Marian knew the voice of her lover she quickly made herself known to him, and great was the rejoicing. A stately banquet was quickly prepared, which was served in a shady bower, and they feasted merrily, while all the tall and comely yeomen drank to the health of Robin Hood's bride. So for many years they dwelt together with great content in the greenwood.

It happened one day as Robin Hood stood under a tree in Barnsdale that Little John went up to him, and said: "Master, if you would dine soon, would it not be well?"

"I do not care to dine," answered Robin, "until I have some bold baron or stranger guest to eat with us, or else some rich rascal who will pay for the feast, or else some knight or squire who dwells in these parts."



"It is already far on in the day; now heaven send us a guest soon, so that we may get to dinner," said Little John.

"Take thy good bow in thy hand," said Robin, "and let Will Scarlet and Much go

with thee, and walk up to the Sayles and so to Watling Street. There wait for some strange guest whom it may very well chance you will meet. Be it earl or baron, or abbot or knight, bring him here to lodge; his dinner shall be ready for him."

So these three good yeomen, Little John, Will Scarlet, and Much went off to the great high-road which is known as Watling Street, and there they looked east and they looked west, but not a man could they see. But as they looked in Barnsdale, by a little private path there came a knight riding, whom they soon met. Very dreary and woebegone seemed this traveller; one foot was in the stirrup, the other dangled outside; his hood hung down over his eyes; his attire was poor and shabby; no sorrier man than he ever rode on a summer's day.

Little John bent low in courtesy before him.

"Welcome, sir knight! Welcome to greenwood! I am right glad to see you. My master hath awaited you fasting these three hours."

"Who is your master?" asked the knight.

"Robin Hood, sir," answered Little John.

"He is a brave yeoman; I have heard much good of him," said the knight. "I will go in company with you, my comrades. My purpose was to have dined to-day at Blyth or Doncaster."

So the knight went with the yeomen, but his face was still sad and careworn, and tears often fell from his eyes. Little John and Will Scarlet brought him to the door of the lodge in Barnsdale, where the outlaws were staying at that time, and as soon as Robin saw him he lifted his hood courteously, and bent low in token of respect.

"Welcome, sir knight, welcome. I am right glad to see you. I have awaited you fasting, sir, for the last three hours."

"God save thee, good Robin, and all thy fair company," returned the knight pleasantly.

Robin brought clear water from the well for the guest to wash himself from the dust of travel, and then they sat down to dinner. The meal was spread under the trees in the greenwood, and rarely had the stranger seen a repast so amply furnished. Bread and wine they had in plenty, and dainty portions of deer, swans and pheasants, plump and tender, and all kinds of water-fowl from the river, and every sort of woodland bird that was good for eating.

Robin heaped his guest's plate with choice morsels, and bade him fall to merrily.

"Eat well, sir knight, eat well," he urged him.

"Thanks, thanks," said the knight. "I have not had such a dinner as this for three weeks. If I come again into this country, Robin, I will make as good a dinner for you as you have made for me."

"Thanks for my dinner, good knight, when I have it," returned the outlaw. "I was never so greedy as to crave for dinner. But before you go, would it not be seemly for you to pay for what you have eaten? It was never the custom for a yeoman to pay for a knight."

"I have nothing in my coffers that I can proffer, for shame," said the knight.

"Go, Little John, and look," said Robin. "Now swear to me that you are telling the truth," he added to his guest.

"I swear to you, by heaven, I have no more than ten shillings," said the knight.

"If you have no more than that I will not take one penny," said Robin. "And if you have need of any more I will lend it you. Go now, Little John, and tell me the truth. If there be no more than ten shillings, not one penny of that will I touch." Little John spread out his mantle on the ground ready to hold any treasure he might find, but when he looked in the knight's coffer he saw nothing but one piece of money of the value of half a pound. He left it lying where it was, and went to tell his master.

"What tidings, John?" asked Robin.

"Sir, the knight is true enough."

"Fill a cup with the best wine, and hand it first to the knight," said Robin. "Sir, I much wonder that your clothing is so thin. Tell me one thing, I pray. I trow you must have been made a knight by force, or else you have squandered your means by reckless or riotous living? Perhaps you have been foolish and thriftless, or else have lost all your money in brawling and strife? Or possibly you have been a usurer or a drunkard, or wasted your life in wickedness and wrongdoing?"

"I am none of those things, by heaven that made me," declared the knight. "For a hundred years my ancestors have been knights. It has often befallen, Robin, that a man may be disgraced, but God who waits in heaven above can amend his state. Within two or three years, my neighbours knew it well, I could spend with ease four hundred pounds of good money. Now I have no goods left but my wife and my children. God has ordained this until He see fit to better my condition."

"In what manner did you lose your riches?" asked Robin.

"By my great folly and kindness," was the answer. "I had a son, who should have been my heir. At twenty years old he could joust right well in the field. Unhappily

the luckless boy slew a knight of Lancashire, and to pay the heavy penalty exacted from him to save his rights I was forced to sell all my goods. Besides this, Robin, my lands are pledged until a certain day to a rich abbot living close by here at St. Mary's Abbey."

"What is the sum?" asked Robin.

"Sir, four hundred pounds, which the abbot lent me."

"Now, if you lose your land what will become of you?" asked Robin.

"I will depart in haste over the salt sea to Palestine. Farewell, friend, there is no better way." Tears filled the knight's eyes, and he made a movement to go. "Farewell, friends, farewell! I have no more that I can pay you."

But Robin stopped him as he would have gone.

"Where are your friends?" he asked.

"Sir, there are none who will know me now. When I was rich enough at home they were glad to come and flatter me, but now they all run from me. They take no more heed of me than if they had never seen me."

The knight's sorrowful story so touched the hearts of Little John and Will Scarlet that they wept for pity. "Come, fill of the best wine," cried Robin. "Come, sir, courage! Never be downcast! Have you any friends from whom you can borrow?" "None," replied the knight.

"Come forth, Little John, and go to my treasury," said Robin. "Bring me four hundred pounds, and look that you count it out carefully."

Then forth went Little John, and with him went Will Scarlet, and he counted out four hundred pounds. But Much, the miller's son, did not look very well pleased to see all this money going into the hands of a stranger.

"Is this wisely done?" he muttered.

"What grieves you?" said Little John. "It is alms to help a noble knight who has fallen into poverty. Master," he went on to Robin Hood, "his clothing is full thin; you must give the knight a suit of raiment to wrap himself in. For you have scarlet and green cloth, master, and plenty of rich apparel. I dare well say there is no merchant in England who has a finer store."

"Give him three yards of cloth of every colour," said Robin Hood, "and see that it be well meted out."

Little John took no other measure than his bow, and every handful he measured he leapt over three feet.

"What devilkin's draper do you think you are?" asked little Much in half-angry

astonishment.

Will Scarlet stood still and laughed.

"John may well give him good measure," he said. "It cost him but light."

Little John paid no heed to their scoffing, but quietly went on with his task.

"Master," he said to Robin Hood, when he had put aside a bountiful store for their guest, "you must give the knight a horse to carry home all these goods."

"Give him a grey courser, and put a new saddle on it," said Robin.

"And a good palfrey as befits his rank," added little Much.

"And a pair of boots, for he is a noble knight," said Will Scarlet.

"And what will you give him, Little John?" asked Robin.

"Sir, a pair of shining gilt spurs to pray for all this company. God bring him safely out of all his trouble."

The poor knight scarcely knew how to thank them for all their goodness.

"When shall the day be for me to pay back the money you have lent me?" he said. "What is your will?"

"This day twelve-month under this greenwood tree," said Robin. "It were a great shame," he added, "for a knight to ride alone without squire, yeomen, or page to walk by his side. I will lend you my man, Little John, to be your lad. He may stand you in yeoman stead if ever you are in need."

As the knight went on his way he thought how well matters had happened for him, and when he looked on Barnsdale he blessed Robin Hood. And when he thought of Will Scarlet, Much, and Little John he blessed them for the best company he had ever been in.

"To-morrow I must go to York town to St. Mary's Abbey," he said to Little John, "and to the abbot of that place I have to pay four hundred pounds. If I am not there by to-morrow night my lands will be lost for ever."

The next day he strode out of the abbot's hall, all his care gone; he flung off his worn raiment, put on his good clothing, and left the other lying where it fell. He went forth singing merrily, back to his own home at Wierysdale, and his lady met him at the gate.

"Welcome, my lord," said his wife. "Sir, are all your possessions lost?"

"Be merry, dame," said the knight, "and pray for Robin Hood that his soul may always dwell in bliss. He helped me out of my distress; had it not been for his kindness we should have been beggars. The abbot and I are in accord; he is

served with his money; the good yeoman lent it me as I came by the way."

The good knight, whose name was Sir Richard Lee, dwelt in prosperity at home till he had four hundred pounds all ready to pay back Robin Hood. He provided himself with a hundred bows made with the best string, and a hundred sheaves of good arrows with brightly burnished heads. Every arrow was an ell long, well dressed with peacock's feathers, and they were all inlaid with silver so that it was a goodly sight to see. The knight provided himself also with a hundred men, well armed, and clothed in white and red, and in the same fashion he attired himself. He bore a lance in his hand, and a man led the horse which carried his change of apparel. And thus he rode with a light heart to Barnsdale.

As he drew near a bridge he was forced to tarry awhile, for there was a great wrestling, and all the best yeomen of the West Country had flocked to it. A good game had been arranged, and valuable prizes were offered. A white bull had been put up, and a great courser, with saddle and bridle all burnished with gold, a pair of gloves, a red gold ring, and a pipe of wine in prime condition. The man who bore himself the best would carry off the prize.

Now there was a certain worthy yeoman there who ought by rights to have been awarded the prize, but because he was a stranger the other wrestlers were jealous, and all set on him unfairly. As he was far from home and had no friends there, he would certainly have been slain if it had not been for the knight who, from the place where he stood, saw what was going on. He took pity on the yeoman, and swore no harm should be done to him, for the love he bore to Robin Hood. He pressed forward into the place, and his hundred archers followed him, with bows bent and sharp arrows to attack the crowd. They shouldered every one aside, and made room for Sir Richard Lee to make known what he had to say.

Then the knight took the yeoman by the hand, and declared he had fairly won the prize. He bought the wine from him for five marks, and bade that it should be broached at once, and that every one who wished should have a draught. Thus good humour and jollity were restored, and the rest of the sports went on merrily.

The knight tarried till the games were done, and in the meanwhile it came to be three hours after noon. And all this time Robin had waited fasting for the coming of the knight to whom twelve months before he had lent the four hundred pounds.

Chapter 2: Little John And The Sheriff Of Nottingham

It will be remembered that when the poor knight left Robin Hood in the forest Little John went with him to act as his yeoman. He stayed for some time in Sir Richard's service, and a light and pleasant post he found it, for he was free to do pretty much as he liked.

It happened one fine day that the young men of Nottingham were eager to go shooting, so Little John fetched his bow, and said he would meet them in a trial of skill. While the match was going on, the Sheriff of Nottingham chanced to pass, and he stood for a while near the marks to watch the sport.

Three times Little John shot, and each time he cleft the wand.

"By my faith, this man is the best archer that ever I saw," cried the sheriff. "Tell me now, my fine lad, what is your name? In what county were you born, and where do you dwell?"

"I was born at Holderness," said Little John, "and when I am at home men call me Reynold Greenleaf."

"Tell me, Reynold Greenleaf, will you come and live with me? I will give you twenty marks a year as wages."

"I have a master already, a noble knight," answered Little John. "It would be better if you would get leave of him."

The sheriff was so pleased with the prowess of Little John that he wanted to get him into his own service, so he went to the knight, and it was agreed the sheriff should have him for twelve months. Little John was therefore given at once a strong horse, well equipped, and now behold him the sheriff's man.

But Little John had not forgotten Robin Hood's words of warning about the sheriff; he knew him to be a false and greedy man, and a ruthless enemy to the outlaws, and Little John was always thinking how he could pay him out for his treachery.

"By my loyalty and truth," said Little John to himself, "I will be the worst servant to him that ever he had."

Little John soon found that his new place was little to his liking. The other servants were not well pleased to see the newcomer; they were jealous of the favour shown to him at first by his master, and treated him with rudeness and contempt. The sheriff himself was very mean; he wished to secure Little John for his service, for he knew such a comely lad and fine archer would do him credit, but once he was sure of him he paid no heed to seeing that he was properly lodged and fed.



It happened one day the sheriff went out hunting, and Little John was left at home forgotten. No meal was served to him, and he was left fasting till noon. As he was by this time very hungry he went to the steward, and asked civilly for something to eat.

"Good sir steward, I pray thee give me to dine," he said. "It is too long for Greenleaf to be so long fasting, therefore I pray thee, steward, give me my dinner."

"I've had no orders," said the steward rudely. "Thou shalt have nothing to eat or to drink till my lord comes back to town."

"Rather than that I'll crack thy head," said Little John.

The steward started forward to the buttery, and shut fast the door, but Little John gave him such a rap on his back it almost broke in two—as long as he lived he would be the worse for the blow. Then Little John put his foot to the door, and burst it open, and Little John went in and helped himself plentifully to both ale and wine.

"Since you will not dine, I will give you to drink," he said to the steward; "though you live for a hundred years you shall remember Little John."

He ate and drank for as long as he chose, and the steward dared say nothing, for he was still smarting from the blow. But the sheriff had in his employ a cook, a bold, sturdy man, and he was no coward either.

"A fine sort of fellow you are to dwell in a house and ask for dinner thus," he cried, and he dealt Little John three good blows.

"I vow I am very well pleased with those strokes of yours," said Little John, "and

before I leave this place you shall be tested better."

He drew his good sword, and the cook seized another, and they went for each other then and there. Neither had any thought of giving in, but both meant to resist stoutly. There they fought sorely for a whole hour, and neither could in any way harm the other.

"Thou art truly one of the very best swordsmen that ever I saw," said Little John. "Couldst thou shoot as well with a bow thou shouldst go with me to the greenwood. Thou wouldst have from Robin Hood twenty marks a year as wages, and a change of clothing twice a year."

"Put up thy sword, and we will be comrades," said the cook.

He fetched at once for Little John a right good meal—dainty venison, good bread, and excellent wine—and they both ate and drank heartily. When they had well feasted they plighted their troth together that they would be with Robin that self-same night. Then they ran as fast as they could to the sheriff's treasury, and though the locks were of good steel they broke them every one. They carried off all the silver plate—vessels, dishes, gold pieces, cups, and spoons, nothing was forgotten.

They took also the money—three hundred and three pounds—and then they went off straight to Robin Hood in the forest.

"God save thee, my dear master," cried Little John.

"Welcome art thou, and also that fair yeoman whom thou bringest with thee," said Robin Hood. "What tidings from Nottingham, Little John?"

"The proud sheriff greeteth thee well, and sendeth you here by me his cook and his silver vessels and three hundred and three pounds," said Little John.

"I dare take my oath it was never by his good will these goods come to me," laughed Robin.

Thus they all made merry in the greenwood, and said the sheriff had been rightly paid for the greed and tyranny with which he performed the duties of his office, for by bribery and oppression he had got his ill-earned wealth.

Presently Little John bethought him of a shrewd device by which they could still further get the better of him. He ran into the forest here and there, and when he had gone about five miles it fell out as he wished; he came across the sheriff himself hunting with hound and horn. Little John was mindful of his manners, and went and knelt on his knee before him, and saluted him courteously.

"Why, Reynold Greenleaf, where hast thou been now?" cried the sheriff.

"I have been in the forest," said Little John, "and there I have seen a wondrous

sight, one of the finest I ever yet saw. Yonder I saw a right gallant hart; his colour is green. Seven score of deer in a herd altogether are with him. His antlers are so sharp, master, I durst not shoot, for dread lest they should slay me."

"By heaven, I would fain see that sight," said the sheriff.

"Turn thy steps thither, then, at once, dear master," said Little John. "Come with me; I will show you where he lies."

The sheriff rode off, and Little John ran beside him, for he was full smart of foot. Through the forest they went, and by-and-by they came to Robin Hood in the midst of his band of yeomen.

"Lo, there is the master hart," said Little John. The sheriff stood still in dismay, and he was a sorry man.

"Woe worth thee, Reynold Greenleaf, thou hast betrayed me."

"Ye are to blame, master, I swear," said Little John. "When I was at home with you I was misserved of my dinner."

Then the outlaws made their guest sit down to supper with them, which he did with no good will, for he would fain have departed to his home at Nottingham. He was served on his own silver dishes, and when he saw his beautiful cups and vessels the sheriff for sorrow could not eat.

"Cheer up, sheriff," urged Robin Hood. "For the sake of Little John thy life is granted thee. What, man, eat and be merry! Here is fine fat venison served in a goodly vessel."

By the time they had well supped, the day was done. Robin then bade his men strip the sheriff of his fine clothes, his hose and his shoes, his kirtle, and the large handsome coat all trimmed with fur—and to give him in their place a green mantle to wrap himself in. He further bade his sturdy lads all to lie round the sheriff in a circle under the greenwood tree, so that he might see them, and know there was no chance of escape.

It was a sorry night the sheriff passed, cold and shivering, in his shirt and breeches, on the hard ground; small wonder that his bones ached, and that he sighed piteously for his soft warm bed at home.

"Come, come, sheriff, cheer up!" said Robin; "for this is our order, you know, under the greenwood tree."

"This is a harder order than any anchorite or friar!" groaned the sheriff. "For all the gold in merry England I would not dwell here long."

"Thou wilt dwell here with me for the next twelve months," said Robin. "I shall

teach thee, proud sheriff, to be an outlaw."

"Before I lie here another night, Robin, smite off my head rather, and I'll forgive it thee," said the sheriff. "Let me go, for pity's sake!" he begged, "and I will be the best friend that ever thou hadst."

"Before I let thee go, thou shalt swear me here an oath," said the outlaw. "Swear on my sword that thou wilt never seek to do me harm by water or by land. And if thou find any of my men, by night or by day, thou shalt swear on thy oath to help them all thou canst."

There was no other way to get back his freedom, so the sheriff was compelled to take the oath demanded by Robin. Then he was allowed to depart, and he went back to Nottingham a sad and sorry man, feeling that he had had more than enough of the greenwood to last him a very long time.

Chapter 3: How Robin Hood Was Paid His Loan

Twelve months had come and gone since Robin Hood lent four hundred pounds to the poor knight to redeem his land, and now the day had arrived when he had promised to pay back the money.

The sheriff had returned to Nottingham, and Robin Hood and his merry men were left in the greenwood.

"Let us go to dinner," said Little John.

"Nay, not yet," said Robin. "Now I fear our friend the knight is likely to prove false, for he comes not to pay back the money, according to his word."

"Have no doubt, master," said Little John, "for the sun has not yet gone to rest."

"Take thy bow," said Robin, "and let Much and Will Scarlet go with you, and walk up into the Sayles, and to Watling Street, and wait there for some stranger guest, for you may well chance upon one there. Whether he be messenger or mountebank, rich man or poor man, he shall share dinner with me."

Forth then started Little John, half-angry and half-troubled, and under his green mantle he girded on a good sword.

The three yeomen went up to the Sayles; they looked east and they looked west, and not a man could they see.

But all the time Robin kept thinking of the knight who had promised to return that day with the borrowed money.

"I marvel much he does not come," he said. "I fear he does not mean to keep

faith."

"Have no doubt, master," said Little John. "You have no need, I say."

Sir Richard Lee, meanwhile, who had tarried to see the wrestling, came while it was still daylight to fulfil his promise. He went straight to Barnsdale, and there he found Robin Hood and his band under the greenwood tree. Directly the knight saw Robin, he dismounted from his palfrey, and saluted him courteously on one knee.

"God save thee, good Robin Hood, and all this company."

"Welcome, welcome, noble knight," said Robin. "I pray thee tell me what need driveth thee to greenwood? I am right glad to see thee. Why hast thou been so long in coming?"

"The abbot and the high justice have been trying to get hold of my land," said the knight.

"Hast thou thy land again?"

"Yea, and for that I thank God and thee. But take not offence that I have come so late in the day. On my journey hither I passed by some wrestling, and there I helped a poor yeoman who was being wrongly put behind by the others."

"Nay, by my faith, for that I thank thee," said Robin. "The man that helpeth a good yeoman, his friend will I be."

"Have here the four hundred pounds you lent me," said the knight, "and here is also twenty marks for your courtesy."

"Nay, keep it and use it well yourself," said Robin, "and thou art right welcome under my trysting-tree. But what are all those bows for, and those finely feathered arrows?"

"They are a poor present to thee," said the knight.

Then Robin Hood bade Little John go to his treasury and fetch four hundred pounds, and he insisted on the knight's accepting this money as a gift.

"Buy thyself a good horse and harness, and gild thy spurs anew," he said laughingly. "And if thou lack enough to spend come to Robin Hood, and by my truth thou shalt never lack while I have any goods of my own. Keep the four hundred pounds I lent thee, and I counsel thee never leave thyself so bare another time."

So good Robin Hood relieved the gentle knight of all his care, and they feasted and made merry under the greenwood tree.



Chapter 4: The Golden Arrow

The knight took his leave and went on his way, and Robin Hood and his merry men lived on for many a day in Barnsdale.

Now the Sheriff of Nottingham proclaimed a grand sport to be held—that all the best archers of the north country should come one day and shoot at the butts, and that a prize should be given to the best archer.

The butts were to be set in a glade in the forest and he who shot the best of all should receive an arrow, the like of which had never been seen in England, for the shaft was to be of silver, and the head and feathers of red gold.

Now all this was a device of the sheriff's to try to enthrall the outlaws, for he imagined that when such matches took place Robin Hood's men without any doubt would be the bowmen there.



Tidings of this came to Robin Hood in the forest, and he said: "Come, make ready, my lads, we will go and see that sport. Ye shall go with me, and I will test the sheriff's faith, and see if he be true."

With that a brave young man, called David of Doncaster, stepped forward.

"Master," he said, "be ruled by me, and do not stir from the greenwood. To tell the truth I am well informed yonder match is a wile. The sheriff has devised it to entrap us."

"That sounds like a coward," said Robin; "thy words do not please me. Come

what will of it, I'll try my skill at yonder brave archery."

Then up spoke brave Little John.

"Let us go thither, but come, listen to me, and I will tell you how we can manage it without being known. We will leave behind us our mantles of Lincoln green, and we will all dress differently so that they will never notice us. One shall wear white, another red, a third one yellow, another blue. Thus in disguise we will go to the sport, whatever may come of it."

When they had their bows in order and their arrows well feathered there gathered round Robin seven score of stalwart young men.

When they came to Nottingham they saw the butts set out fair and long, and many were the bold archers who came to shoot. The outlaws mixed with the rest to prevent all suspicion, for they thought it more discreet not to keep together.

"Only six of you shall shoot with me," said Robin to his men. "The rest must stand on guard with bows bent so that I be not betrayed."

The sheriff looked all round, but amidst eight hundred men he could not see what he suspected.

The outlaws shot in turn, and they all did so well that the people said that if Robin Hood had been there, and all his men to boot, none of them could have surpassed these men.

"Ay," quoth the sheriff ruefully, rubbing his head. "I thought he would have been here; I certainly thought he would, but though he is bold he doesn't dare to appear."

His speech vexed Robin Hood to the heart. "Very soon," he thought angrily, "thou shalt well see that Robin Hood was here."

Some cried blue jacket, another cried brown, and a third cried brave yellow, but a fourth man said: "Yonder man in red hath no match in the place."

Now that was Robin Hood himself, for he was clothed in red. Three times he shot, and each time he split the wand. To him, therefore, was delivered the golden arrow as being the most worthy. He took the gift courteously, and would have departed back to the greenwood; but the Sheriff of Nottingham had by this time marked him, and had no mind to let him go so easily. The alarm was raised; they cried out on Robin Hood, and great horns were blown to summon help to capture him.

"Treachery! treason!" cried Robin. "Full evil art thou to know! And woe to thee, proud sheriff, thus to entertain thy guest! It was otherwise thou promised me yonder in the forest. But had I thee in the greenwood again, under my trysting-

tree, thou shouldst leave me a better pledge than thy loyalty and truth."

Then on all sides bows were bent, and arrows flew like hail; kirtles were rent, and many a stout knave pricked in the side. The outlaws shot so strong that no one could drive them back, and the sheriff's men fled in haste.

Robin saw the ambush was broken, and would fain have been back in the greenwood, but many an arrow still rained on his company. Little John was hurt full sorely, with an arrow in his knee, and could neither ride nor walk.

"Master," he cried, "if ever thou loved me, and for the meed of my service that I have served thee, let never that proud sheriff find me alive! But take thy sword and smite off my head, and give me deep and deadly wounds, so that no life be left in me."

"I would not that, John—I would not thou wert slain for all the gold in merry England!" cried Robin.

"God forbid that thou shouldst part our company, Little John," said Much.

He took Little John up on his back, and carried him a good mile, and more. Often he laid him down on the ground, and turned to shoot those who came after, and then he took him up and carried him on again. So the outlaws fought their way, step by step, back to the forest.

A little within the wood there was a fair castle, with a double moat, and surrounded by stout walls. Here dwelt that noble knight, Sir Richard Lee, to whom Robin Hood had lent the four hundred pounds to redeem his land.

He saw the little company of outlaws fighting their way along, so he hastened to call them to come and take shelter in his castle.

"Welcome art thou, Robin Hood! Welcome!" he cried, as he led them in. "Much I thank thee for thy comfort and courtesy and great kindness to me in the forest. There is no man in the world I love so much as thee. For all the proud Sheriff of Nottingham, here thou shalt be safe!—Shut the gates, and draw the bridge, and let no man come in!" he shouted to his retainers. "Arm you well; make ready; guard the walls! One thing, Robin, I promise thee: here shalt thou stay for twelve days as my guest, to sup, and eat, and dine."

Swiftly and readily tables were laid and cloths spread, and Robin Hood and his merry men sat down to a good meal.

Chapter 5: How The Sheriff Took Sir Richard Prisoner

The Sheriff of Nottingham was wroth when he heard that Robin Hood and his

band of outlaws had taken refuge in the knight's castle. All the country was up in rout, and they came and besieged the castle. From his post outside the walls the sheriff loudly proclaimed that the knight was a traitor, and was shielding the king's enemy against the laws and right.

"I am ready to answer for the deeds I have done here by all the lands I possess, as I am a true knight," was Sir Richard's answer. "Go on your way, sirs, and leave me alone in peace until ye know our king's will, what he will say to you."

The sheriff, having had his answer, curt and to the point, rode forth at once to London to carry the tale to the king.

He told him of the knight, and of Robin Hood, and of the band of bold archers which the latter kept up.



"The knight boasts of what he has done to aid these outlaws," said the sheriff. "He would be lord, and set you at nought through all the north country."

"I will be at Nottingham within the fortnight," said the king, "and I will seize Robin Hood, and also that knight. Go home, sheriff, and do as I bid thee. Get ready enough good archers from all the country round about."

So the sheriff took his leave, and went home to Nottingham to do as the king commanded.

Robin meanwhile had left the castle, and had gone back to the greenwood, and Little John, as soon as he was whole from the arrow-shot in his knee, went and joined him there. It caused great vexation to the sheriff to know that Robin Hood once more walked free in the forest, and that he had failed of his prey; but all the more he was resolved to be revenged on Sir Richard Lee. Night and day he kept watch for that noble knight; at last, one morning when Sir Richard went out hawking by the riverside, the sheriff's men-at-arms seized him, and he was led bound hand and foot to Nottingham.

When Sir Richard's wife heard that her husband had been taken prisoner, she lost no time in seeking help. Mounting a good palfrey, she rode off at once to the greenwood, and there she found Robin Hood and all his men.

"God save thee, Robin Hood, and all thy company! For the love of heaven, grant me a boon! Let not my wedded lord be shamefully slain. He is taken fast bound to Nottingham, all for the love of thee!"

"What man hath taken him?" asked Robin.

"The proud sheriff," said the lady. "He has not yet passed on his way three miles."

Up then started Robin as if he were mad.

"Arm, lads! Arm and make ready! By heaven, he that fails me now shall never more be man of mine!"

Speedily good bows were bent, seven score and more, and away went the outlaws, full speed over hedge and ditch, in chase of the sheriff's men, When they came to Nottingham, there in the street they overtook the sheriff.

"Stay, thou proud sheriff—stay and speak with me!" said Robin. "I would fain hear from thee some tidings of our king. By heaven, these seven years have I never gone so fast on foot, and I swear it bodeth no good for thee."

He bent his bow, and sent an arrow with all the might he could; it hit the sheriff so that he fell to the ground, and lay there stunned, and before he could rise to his feet Robin drew his sword and smote off his head.

"Lie thou there, proud sheriff, traitor and evildoer!" said Robin. "No man might ever trust to thee whilst thou wert still alive!"

Now they fought hand to hand. Robin Hood's men drew their shining swords, and laid on so heavily that they drove down the sheriff's men one after another.

Robin Hood ran to Sir Richard Lee, and cut his bonds in two, and, thrusting a bow into his hand, bid him stand by him.

"Leave thy horse behind thee, and learn to run on foot," he counselled him. "Thou shalt go with me to the greenwood through mire and moss and fen. Thou shalt go with me to the forest, and dwell with me there, until I have got our pardon from Edward, our king."

Chapter 6: How The King Came To Sherwood Forest

Tidings of the sheriff's death were sent to King Edward in London, and he came to Nottingham with a great array of knights to lay hold of Sir Richard Lee and Robin Hood, if that were possible. He asked information from men of all the country round, and when he had heard their tale and understood the case he seized all the lands belonging to Sir Richard Lee. He went all through Lancashire, searching far and wide, till he came to Plumpton Park, and everywhere he missed many of his deer. There he had always been wont to see herds in large numbers, but now he could scarcely find one deer that bore any good horn.

The king was furiously wroth at this.

"By heaven I would that I had Robin Hood here before me to see him with my own eyes," he exclaimed. "And he that shall smite off the knight's head and bring it here to me shall have all the lands belonging to Sir Richard Lee. I will give them him with my charter, and seal it with my hand for him to have and to hold, for evermore."

Then up spoke a good old knight who was very faithful and loyal.

"Ay, my liege lord the king, but I will say one word to you," he said. "There is no man in this country who will have the knight's lands as long as Robin can go or ride and carry bow in hand. If any one try to possess them he will assuredly lose his head. Give them to no man, my lord, to whom you wish any good."

The king dwelt for many months in Nottingham, but no man came to claim the knight's lands, nor could he ever hear of Robin Hood in what part of the country he might be. But always Robin went freely here and there, roving wherever he chose over hill and valley, slaying the king's deer, and disposing of it at his will.

Then a head forester, who was in close attendance on the king, spoke up, and said:

"If you would see good Robin you must do as I tell you. Take five of the best knights that are in your train, and go down to yonder abbey, and get you monks' habits. I will be your guide to show you the way, and before you get back to Nottingham I dare wager my head that you will meet with Robin if he be still alive. Before you come to Nottingham you shall see him with your own eyes."



The king hastened to follow the forester's counsel; he and his five monks went to the abbey, and speedily disguised themselves in the garb of monks, and then blithely returned home through the greenwood. Their habits were grey; the king was a head taller than all the rest, and he wore a broad hat, just as if he were an abbot, and behind him followed his baggage-horse, and well-laden sumpters, and in this fashion they rode back to the town.

They had gone about a mile through the forest under the linden trees when they met with Robin Hood standing in the path with many of his bold archers.

"Sir abbot, by your leave, ye must bide awhile with us," said Robin, seizing the king's horse. "We are yeomen of this forest, we live by the king's deer, and we have no other means. But you have both churches and rents, and full great plenty of gold; give us some of your store for charity's sake."

"I brought no more than forty pounds with me to the greenwood," said the pretended abbot. "I have been staying at Nottingham for a fortnight with the king, and I have spent a great deal on many of the fine lords there. I have only forty pounds left, but if I had a hundred I would give it thee."

Robin took the forty pounds, and divided it into two parts; half he gave to his men, and bade them be merry with it, and the other half he returned to the king.

"Sir, have this for your spending," he said courteously. "We shall meet another day."

"Thanks," said the king. "But Edward our king greeteth you well; he sends thee here his seal, and bids thee come to Nottingham to dine and sup there."

He took out the broad seal, and let him see it, and Robin at the sight of it, knowing what was right and courteous, set him on his knee.

"I love no man in all the world so well as I do my king," he said. "Welcome is my lord's seal, and welcome art thou, monk, because of thy tidings. Sir abbot, for love of my king thou shalt dine with me to-day under my trysting-tree."

Forth he led the king with all gentle courtesy, and many a deer was slain and hastily dressed for the feast. Then Robin took a great horn and blew a loud blast and seven score of stalwart young men came ready in a row, and knelt on their knee before Robin in sign of salutation.

"Here is a brave sight," said the king to himself. "In good faith his men are more at his bidding than mine are at mine."

Dinner was speedily prepared, and they went to it at once, and both Robin and Little John served the king with all their might. Good viands were quickly set before him—fat venison, fish out of the river, good white bread, good red wine, and fine brown ale. The king swore he had never feasted better in his life.

Then Robin took a can of ale, and bade every man drink a health to the king. The king himself drank to the king, and so the toast went round, and two barrels of strong old ale were spent in pledging that health.

"Make good cheer, abbot," said Robin, "and for these same tidings thou hast brought thou art doubly welcome. Now before thou go hence thou shalt see what life we lead here in the greenwood, so that thou mayest inform the king when ye meet together."

The meal was scarcely over when up started all the outlaws in haste, and bows were smartly bent. For a moment the king was sorely aghast, for he thought he would certainly be hurt. But no man intended ill to him. Two rods were set up, and to them all the yeomen flocked to try their skill at archery. The king said the marks were too far away by fifty paces, but he had never seen shooting such as

this. On each side of the rods was a rose garland, and all the yeomen had to shoot within this circle. Whoever failed of the rose garland had as penalty to lose his shooting gear, and to hand it to his master, however fine it might be, and in addition to this he had to stand a good buffet on the head. All that came in Robin's way he smote therewith right good will.

When his own turn came Robin shot twice, and each time cleft the wand, so also did the good yeoman Gilbert. Little John and Will Scarlet did not come off so well, and when they failed to hit within the garland they each got a good buffet from Robin.

But at his last shot, in spite of the way in which his friends had fared, Robin, too, failed of the garland by three fingers or more.

"Master, your tackle is lost," said Gilbert. "Stand forth and take your pay."

"If it be so there is no help for it," said Robin. "Sir abbot, I deliver thee mine arrow; I pray thee, sir, serve thou me."

"It falleth not within my order, by thy leave, Robin, to smite any good yeoman, for fear lest I grieve him," said the king.

"Smite on boldly; I give thee full leave," said Robin.

The king at these words at once folded back his sleeves, and gave Robin such a buffet that it nearly knocked him to the ground.

"By heaven, thou art a stalwart friar," cried Robin. "There is pith in thine arm; I trow thou canst shoot well."

Then King Edward and Robin Hood looked each other full in the face, and Robin Hood gazed wistfully at the king. So also did Sir Richard Lee, and then he knelt down before him on his knee. And all the wild outlaws, when they saw Sir Richard Lee and Robin Hood kneeling before the king, also knelt down.

"My lord the King of England, now I know you well," said Robin. "Mercy, of thy goodness and thy grace, for my men and me! Yes, before heaven, I crave mercy, my lord the king, for me and for my men."

"Yes, I grant thee thy petition," said the king, "if thou wilt leave the greenwood, thou and all thy company, and come home with me, sir, to my court, and dwell with me there."

"I will swear a solemn vow that so it shall be," said Robin. "I will come to your court to see your service and bring with me seven score and three of my men. But unless I like well your service, I shall soon come back to the forest, and shoot again at the dun deer, as I am wont to do."

Chapter 7: How Robin Hood Went Back To The Greenwood

"Hast thou any good cloth that thou wilt sell to me now?" said the king.

"Yes, three and thirty yards," said Robin.

"Then I pray thee, Robin, sell me some of it for me and my company."

"Yes, I will," said Robin. "I should be a fool if I did not, for I trow another day you will clothe me against Christmas."

So the king speedily cast off his coat, and donned a garment of green, and so did all his knights. When they were all clad in Lincoln green and had thrown aside their monks' grey habits, "Now we will go to Nottingham," said the king.

They bent their bows, and away they went, shooting in the same band, as if they were all outlaws. The king and Robin Hood rode together, and they shot "pluck-buffet" as they went by the way—that is to say, whoever missed the mark at which he aimed was to receive a buffet from the other; many a buffet the king won from Robin Hood, and good Robin spared nothing of his pay.

"Faith," said the king, "thy game is not easy to learn; I should not get a shot at thee though I tried all this year."

When they drew near Nottingham, all the people stood to behold them. They saw nothing but mantles of green covering all the field; then every man began saying to another: "I dread our king is slain; if Robin Hood comes to the town, he will never leave one of us alive. "They all hastened to make their escape, both men and lads, yeomen and peasants; the ploughman left the plough in the fields, the smith left his shop, and old wives who could scarcely walk hobbled along on their staves.



The king laughed loud and long to see the townsfolk scurry off in this fashion, and he commanded them to come back. He soon let them understand that he had been in the forest, and that from that day for evermore he had pardoned Robin Hood. When they found out the tall outlaw in the Lincoln green was really the king, they were overjoyed; they danced and sang, and made great feasting and revelry for gladness at his safe return.

Then King Edward called Sir Richard Lee, and there he gave him his lands again, and bade him be a good man. Sir Richard thanked the king, and paid homage to

him as the true and loyal knight he had always been.

So Robin Hood went back to London with the king, and dwelt at court. But before many months had gone he found all his money had melted away, and that he had nothing left. He had spent over a hundred pounds and now had not enough to pay the fees of his followers. For everywhere he went he had always been laying down money both for knights and squires, in order to win renown. When he could no longer afford to pay their fee, all the new retainers left him, and by the end of the year he had none but two still with him, and those were his own faithful old comrades, Little John and Will Scarlet.

It happened one day some young men of the court went out to shoot, and as Robin Hood stood with a sad heart to watch them, a sudden great longing for his old life in the greenwood came over him.

"Alas!" he sighed, "my wealth has gone! Once on a time I too was a famous archer, sure of eye and strong of hand; I was accounted the best archer in merry England. Oh, to be back once more in the heart of the greenwood, where the merry does are skipping, and the wind blows through the leaves of the linden, and little birds sit singing on every bough! If I stay longer with the king, I shall die of sorrow!"

So Robin Hood went and begged a boon of the king.

"My lord the King of England, grant me what I ask! I built a little chapel in Barnsdale, which is full seemly to see, and I would fain be there once again. For seven nights past I have neither slept nor closed my eyes, nor for all these seven days have I eaten or drunk. I have a sore longing after Barnsdale; I cannot stay away. Barefoot and doing penance will I go thither."

"If it be so, there is nothing better to be done," said the king. "Seven nights—no longer—I give thee leave to dwell away from me."

Thanking the king, Robin Hood saluted him and took his leave full courteously, and away he went to the greenwood.

It was a fair morning when he came to the forest. The sun shone, the soft green turf was strewn with flowers that twinkled like stars, and all the air rang with the song of birds. The cloud of care and sorrow rolled away from Robin's spirit, and his heart danced as light as a leaf on the tree.

"It is long since I was here last," he said, as he looked around him. "I think I should like to shoot once more at the deer."

He fitted an arrow to his bow, and away it sped to its mark, and down dropped a fine fat hart. Then Robin blew his horn. And as the blast rang out, shrill and sweet and piercing, all the outlaws of the forest knew that Robin Hood had come

again. Through the woodland they gathered together, and fast they came trooping, till in a little space of time seven score stalwart lads stood ready in order before Robin. They took off their caps, and fell on their knee in salutation.

"Welcome, our master! Welcome, welcome back to the greenwood!" they shouted.

Chapter 8: Robin Hood And The Butcher

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.

Chapter 9: The Jolly Tanner

About this time there was living in Nottingham a jolly tanner whose name was Arthur-a-Bland. Never a squire in Nottingham could beat Arthur, or bid him stand if he chose to go on. With a long pike-staff on his shoulder he could clear his way so well he made every one fly before him.

One summer's morning Arthur-a-Bland went forth into Sherwood Forest to see the deer, and there he met Robin Hood. As soon as Robin saw him he thought he would have some sport, so he called to him to stand.

"Why, who art thou, fellow, who rangest here so boldly?" he said. "In sooth, to be brief, thou lookst like a thief who comes to steal the king's venison. I am a keeper in the forest; the king puts me in trust to look after the deer. Therefore I must bid thee stand."

"If you be a keeper in this forest, and have so great authority," answered the tanner, "yet you must have plenty of helpers in store before you can make me stop."

"I have no helpers in store, nor do I need any. But I have good weapons which I know will do the deed."

"I don't care a straw for your sword or your bow, nor all your arrows to boot," said Arthur-a-Bland. "If you get a knock on your pate, your weapons will be no good."

"Speak civilly, good fellow," said Robin, "or else I will correct thee for thy rudeness, and make thee more mannerly."



"Marry, see how you'll look with a knock on your head!" quoth the tanner. "Are you such a goodly man? I care not a rush for your looking so big. Look out for yourself, if you can."

Then Robin Hood unbuckled his belt, and laid down his bow, and took up a staff of oak, very stiff and strong.

"I yield to your weapons, since you will not yield to mine," said Robin. "I, too, have a staff, not half a foot longer than yours. But let me measure before we begin, for I would not have mine to be longer than yours, for that would be counted foul play."

"The length of your staff is nothing to me," said the tanner. "Mine is of good stout oak; it is eight feet and a half long, and it will knock down a calf—and I hope it will knock down you."

At these rude and mocking words, Robin could not longer forbear, but gave the tanner such a crack on the head that the blood began to flow. Arthur quickly recovered, and gave Robin in return such a knock that in a few minutes blood ran trickling down the side of his face. As soon as he felt himself so badly hurt, Robin raged like a wild boar, while Arthur-a-Bland laid on so fast it was almost as if he were cleaving wood. Round about they went, like wild boars at bay, striving to maim each other in leg or arm or any place. Knock for knock they dealt lustily, so that the wood rang at every blow, and this they kept up for two hours or more.

But at last Robin was forced to own that he had met his match, and he called to the sturdy stranger to stay.

"Hold thy hand, hold thy hand, and let our quarrel drop!" he cried. "For we may thrash our bones all to smash here, and get no good out of it. Hold thy hand, and hereafter thou shalt be free in the merry forest of Sherwood."

"Thank you for nothing!" retorted Arthur. "I have bought my own freedom. I may

thank my good staff for this, and not you."

"What tradesman are you, good fellow, and where do you dwell?"

"I am a tanner, and in Nottingham I have worked for many years. If you will come there, I vow and protest I will tan your hide for nothing."

"Heaven have mercy, good fellow, since you are so kind and obliging," said Robin. "If you will tan my hide for nothing, I'll do as much for you. But come, if you will forsake your tanner's trade, to live here with me in the greenwood, my name is Robin Hood, and I swear faithfully to give you good gold and wages."

"If you are Robin Hood, as I think very well you are, then here's my hand," said the tanner. "My name is Arthur-a-Bland. We two will never part. But tell me, where is Little John? I would fain hear of him, for we are allied, through our mother's family, and he is my dear kinsman."

Then Robin blew a loud, shrill blast on his bugle, and instantly Little John came quickly tripping over the hill. "Oh, what is the matter? Master, I pray you tell me!" cried Little John. "Why do you stand there with your staff in your hand? I fear all is not well."

"Yes, man, I do stand here, and this tanner beside me has made me stand," said Robin. "He is a fine fellow, and master of his trade, for he has soundly tanned my hide."

"He is to be commended if he can do such a feat," said Little John. "If he is so sturdy, we will have a bout together, and he shall tan my hide too."

"Hold your hand," said Robin; "for, as I understand he is a good yeoman of your own blood; his name is Arthur-a-Bland."

Then Little John flung away his staff as far as he could, and running up to Arthur-a-Bland, threw his arms around his neck. Both were ready and eager to be friends, and made no attempt to hide their delight at the meeting, but wept for joy. Then Robin Hood took a hand of each, and they danced all round the oak-tree, singing:

"For three merry men, and three merry men,
And three merry men we be!

"And ever hereafter, as long as we live,
We three will be as one;
The wood it shall ring, and the old wife sing,
Of Robin Hood, Arthur, and John."

Chapter 10: How Robin Hood Drew His Bow For The Last Time

But there came a day at last when Robin Hood had to bid farewell to the greenwood where he and his merry men had spent so many happy years. Word was sent to the king that the outlaws waxed more and more insolent to his nobles and all those in authority, and that unless their pride was quelled the land would be overrun.

A council of state was therefore called, to consider what was best to be done. Having consulted a whole summer's day, at length it was agreed that some one should be sent to seize Robin Hood and bring him before the king.

A trusty and most worthy knight, called Sir William, was chosen for this task.

"Go you hence to that insolent outlaw, Robin Hood," said the king, "and bid him surrender himself without more ado, or he and all his crew shall suffer. Take a hundred valiant bowmen, all chosen men of might, skilled in their art, and clad in glittering armour."

"My sovereign liege, it shall be done," said the knight. "I'll venture my blood against Robin Hood, and bring him alive or dead."

A hundred men were straightway chosen, as proper men as were ever seen, and on midsummer day they marched forth to conquer the bold outlaw.

With long yew-bows and shining spears they marched in pomp and pride, and they never halted nor delayed till they came to the forest.

"Tarry here, and make ready your bows, that in case of need you may follow me," said the knight to his archers. "And look you observe my call. I will go first, in person, with the letters of our good king, duly signed and sealed, and if Robin Hood will surrender we need not draw a string."

The knight wandered about the forest, till at length he came to the tent of Robin Hood. He greeted the outlaw, and showed him the king's letter, whereupon Robin sprang to his feet and stood on guard.

"They would have me surrender, then, and lie at their mercy?" quoth Robin. "Tell them from me that shall never be while I have seven score of good men."

Sir William, who was a bold and hardy knight, made an attempt to seize Robin then and there, but Robin was too quick to be caught, and bade him forbear such tricks. Then he set his horn to his mouth, and blew a blast or two; the knight did the same.

Instantly from all sides archers came running, some for Robin Hood, some for the knight.

Sir William drew up his men with care, and placed them in battle array. Robin Hood was no whit behind with his yeomen. The fray was stern and bloody. The archers on both sides bent their bows, and arrows flew in clouds. In the very first flight the gallant knight, Sir William, was slain; but nevertheless the fight went on with fury, and lasted from morning until almost noon. They fought till both parties were spent, and only ceased when neither side had strength to go on. Those of the king's archers that still remained went back to London with right good will, and Robin Hood's men retreated to the depths of the greenwood.

But Robin Hood's last fight was fought, and of all the arrows that ever he shot, there was but one yet to fly. As he left the field of battle he was taken ill, and he felt his strength fail, and the fever rise in his veins.

His life was ebbing fast away, and now he was too weak to go on.

Then he remembered his little bugle-horn, which still hung at his side, and setting it to his mouth, he blew once, twice, and again—a low, weak blast.

Away in the greenwood, as he sat under a tree, Little John heard the well-known call, but so faint and feeble was the sound it struck like ice to his heart.

"I fear my master is near dead, he blows so wearily!"

Never after hart or hind ran Little John as he ran that day to answer his master's dying call. He raced like the wind till he came to where Robin was, and fell on his knee before him.

"Give me my bent bow in my hand," said Robin Hood, "and I will let fly a broad arrow, and where this arrow is taken up, there shall you dig my grave.

"Lay me a green sod under my head,
And another at my feet;
And lay my bent bow at my side,
Which was my music sweet;
And make my grave of gravel and green,
Which is most right and meet."

So Robin Hood drew his bow for the last time, and there where the arrow fell, under a clump of the greenwood trees, they dug the grave as he had said, and buried him.



Stories help us explore cultures, learn moral lessons, connect with nature — or simply have fun. That's why ririro.com offers 3,000+ free stories — fairy tales, fables, bedtime stories, myths and more — for every age, in 13 languages, with free printable PDFs and often audio. Reading should be a right, not a privilege. Share ririro.com and spread the joy of reading.

Instagram: @ririro_reading · Pinterest: pinterest.com/ririrocom