

THE
FAMOUS EXPLOITS
OF
ROBIN HOOD,
Little John,
AND HIS
Merry Men all.



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FAMOUS EXPLOITS

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(after 1813-1838)

OF

ROBIN HOOD.



HIS celebrated outlaw was born in Nottinghamshire. His father was head ranger of the North of England, and earl of Huntingdon. His mother was the daughter of Richard, Earl of Warwick; and he had a rich old uncle named Gamwell, of Gamwell Hall, a noted sportsman in Yorkshire. The family Residence was at Loxley, near Sherwood Forest.

His acquaintance with Little John commenced at his uncles; Little John, alias John Little, was a fine tall man, and good archer. He had been long in his uncle's service, who for his faithful attendance, left him an estate at Ripon. Robin and John became sworn brothers, and were continually together, both in parties of pleasure,

robbing, or otherwise. The first adventure of theirs on record, was performed by them and fifteen more on the Bishop of Carlisle, who had fifteen men in his retinue. Robin having intelligence that the prelate was on his way to London, met him near Ferry-bridge, attacked him, took from him eight hundred marks, and tying him to a tree, made him sing mass; after which he untied him, set him on his horse again, with his face to the tail, and in that condition, obliged him to ride to London.

The Lord Mayor of London having proposed a shooting match in Finsbury fields, invited the king to assist at the sports. Robin and the principals of his gang, had a mind to be parties in it; and came up to London, where they mixed, incognito, among the company assembled.

Great commendations were given to the king's archers, who shot exceedingly well, and large bets moving about, Robin stepped up, and offered to lay one hundred marks that he would single out three men that should shoot better than any other three that could be produced to them. The king took up our adventurer; and the queen, admiring the resolution of the strangers, was incited to lay a thousand pounds on their heads which was followed by several of the nobility. Robin bent his bow, and shot almost into the middle of the clout, beating his adversary about a span; little John hit the black mark in it; but Midge, the miller, pinned up the basket, by cleaving with his arrow the pin in two which was in the black.

When the king came to know that it was Robin and part of his gang that had beat his archers, he swore that he should be hanged whenever he was caught; and sent out several detachments of soldiers into the forest after him; but Robin having notice of this, withdrew into Yorkshire, thence into Cheshire, and then to London, till the hue and cry was over, when he returned, to the no small enjoyment of his friends, having been absent eighteen months.

Robin happening to be out one morning, observed a young man, sitting under the shade of a tree, in a very melancholy and dejected mood; the sight of which made our adventurer step up to him and ask him the reason of his sitting so desolate there? The young man broke out very fervently against women, who, he said, were the most perfidious wretches in the world! "I, this morn-



ing," said he, "was to be married to a gentleman's daughter of that house; but money being a stronger persuasive than the truest love, another person in the neighbourhood has surplanted me by the young woman's own appointment." "Ay, ay!" says Robin, "is your case so? Never be afraid man, put on a more cheerful look, and I'll warrant you success: you shall not only have the woman but her fortune too."

Robin immediately went back to the church, and meeting the bishop, began to discourse with him on religion, till a wealthy knight and the young man's mistress came in to be married. Upon which Robin said, " 'Tis a great shame that such a beautiful young woman should be married to an old man like this, no, no, she shall have her own bridegroom, and he his own mistress." With that he blew a blast, and straightway appeared the young man and twenty yeoman. "Now," said Robin, "you shall enjoy the woman you love, this very day."—"No, hold," said the Bishop, "that's against the law of our church, to marry any person that has not been asked three times."—Robin hearing this, immediately pulled off the Bishop's robes, and put them on Little John who went up directly to the choir, and asked them seven times before all the people; but the young gentlewoman refused to make response, till menaces forced her into a compliance; when away they carried her to Sherwood where they kept the wedding.

Robin happening to be once at Coventry, and understanding that a certain lord was to set out for London



the next day on horseback, with a great retinue, he put himself in woman's apparel, and having a tolerable good face and shape, the noble peer was pleased to scrape acquaintance with this young damsel, as he supposed her; after a great deal of chat, his lordship being humorously inclined, putting the question to her, Robin pretending great modesty, said, "It became her sex never to permit dishonesty to come nearer than her ears." However his lordship pursuing his inclinations very close, she told his lordship, that if they had been in any place of privacy, she would have been ready to gratify his desire, but to expose herself to all his men she would not for the world. They had not rode above a half a mile farther, before a wood presented itself to their sight; he ordered his servants to go on till he came to them. He and his mistress rode into the wood and there alighted, but what was his surprise, when instead of the caresses of his fair one, he met with a good beating from our hero, who robbed him of a hundred marks, and tied him to a tree, and bid my lord; farewell till the next meeting. The servants waiting the return of their master, wondered at his long absence; but at last they determined to seek him out, and entering the wood they heard a voice crying for help they followed the sound till at length they found his lordship fast. He bid them untie him, and said, that the villain he had taken for a woman had proved to be no other than a highwayman and a robber, and that he had taken all that he had from him.

Soon after this, Robin disguised himself in a friar's



habit, and had not gone far before he met a couple of priests; making a pitiful moan to them, begged their charity, and that they would relieve one of their function for the Virgin Mary's sake. "That we would willingly do," said they, "but we have lately met with a gang of villains, who robbed us of all our money." "I am afraid," said Robin, "you are addicted to lying, that an honest man cannot take your word; therefore let us all go down on our knees, and pray to the Virgin Mary to send some money to defray our charges. Upon which they offered to run away; but Robin stopped them and made them go to prayers.

They had not been long at their supplications, before Robin bid one of them feel in his pockets what the Virgin hath sent; upon which they both put their hands in their pockets, and pulled out nothing. Robin upon this fell into a great passion and searched their pockets, where he found five hundred pieces of gold. When he saw this he could not forbear calling them lying and deceitful knaves. Soon after they rose up to go, but Robin stopped them, and made them take an oath, never to tell lies to a friar again, nor tempt young virgins, nor to lay with other men's wives. After which he returned to Sherwood.

A gentleman riding from Coventry to London, met with Robin Hood, and thinking him to be honest, desired him to turn back and go some other way, or he would meet with some highwayman, for he had narrowly escaped them himself, advised him if he had any charge about him, not to venture that way.

“I have no charge about me, Sir,” said Robin; “however, I’ll take your advice for fear of the worst.” As they were riding along, said Robin, “Perhaps we may meet some of the gang by the way, for this is an ugly road; therefore I’ll secure what little I have, by putting it into my mouth.” The gentleman not the least suspecting him, told that he had secured his gold in the feet of his stockings, which he had received that day for rent. They had not gone above a half a mile further, before Robin bid the gentleman stand and deliver his money. The gentleman was in a great surprise, and told him he took him for an honest person. However there was no remedy for the loss of his money, which was ninety marks. The gentleman, cursed his folly for telling where he hid his money.

One day, Robin meeting with a butcher going to the market to sell his meat, bought his whole cargo, and his mare with it, which came together to about twenty pounds. With these Robin goes to market, and sells his bargain presently, making such good pennyworths, that all the people thought he had stole it; which having converted into money, he put into an inn, and treated all his customers to the value of five pounds, which coming to the sheriff’s ears, who was at the same time in the inn, and taking him to be some prodigal spark, of whom he might make a penny, intrudes into his company, and, after some discourse, asked him if he had any more meat to sell? “Not ready dressed,” said Robin, “but I have two or three hundred head of cattle at home, and a hundred acres of land to keep them on, which if you will buy, I’ll sell you a pennyworth.” The Sheriff snapped at the proffer, and took four hundred pounds with him. Away they rode together: but he was very much surprised at the melancholy place that Robin had brought him too; Robin winding his horn, presently came Little John, with fifty of his companions, who were commanded by Robin to take the sheriff to dinner, assuring them he had enough to pay his share. Accordingly after dinner they took all his gold from him.

Robin Hood, another time, was riding towards London, met with William Longchamp, Bishop of Ely, with a small retinue of about four or five in number. Immediately he rides up to one of the Bishop’s servants, whom he pretended to know. The discourse which Robin had

ROBIN HOOD.



with the man, made his lordship and his retinue think him to be honest, and they held a great deal of chat with him on the road, till at last an opportunity favouring his intention, says he to the Bishop's attendant, "I am very dry and since you are pleased to give me protection from danger as far as I shall go your way, I'll ride before you, and see if I can get some liquor to treat you for your civility:" Robin set spurs to his horse, and rode away, when, being out of sight, he quickly tied his horse to a tree in a wood which was on the side of the road through which the Bishop was to pass; and making what haste he could back to the company, says, "O, gentlemen! I am ruined and undone; for by yonder lane meeting with two rogues, they have robbed me of all I had: they have taken forty marks from me: but being badly mounted, I don't doubt but you'd soon take them."

The bishop, pitying Robin's loss, said to his servants, "let the poor fellow show you which way the rogues took, and go all of you after them;" and when they came into a narrow lane, he gave them the directions for pursuing the men; he went immediately, and said to the Bishop, "Sir, my time is short, therefore you must deliver your money, or expect the worst usage." The Bishop was very much surprised, but not knowing how to help himself, was forced to give up his money; Robin hastened to the wood, mounted his horse, and rode off. Soon after the bishop being met by his servants, they told him they could not hear of the rogues high or low. "Ah!" answered the Bishop, "the greatest rogue has

been with me; for he that pretended to be robbed of forty marks has just made up the loss by robbing me o six times the money."

In the road through Dunchurch, he met with the parson of Ferry-bridge with a fat buck across his saddle, and disguised in a frock like a countryman. The divine did not know Robin, who had only a quarter staff, resolved to rob him and take his horse also. Robin laid hold of the bridle of his horse, demanding him to dismount and deliver his money. Who, with a whip, struck at Robin a blow that would have settled him, but he received him with his staff, when again snatching the bridle, with a stroke of his stick brought the disguised parson down, notwithstanding he resisted, and a struggle ensued: but Robin being resolute, he at last surrendered both money and horse; so he mounted, and as he rode off he told the priest he might do without, as he would not be wanted till Sunday, when he might remember him in his orisons.

And now I must bring my stories to a close, and the unhappy death of the valiant Robin Hood.

Robin fell ill, and because he required to be treated with skill, he went to Kirkly Abbey, where they sent for a monk to bleed him, and this monk being eager to get the reward that king Henry had set upon Robin Hood's head, most treacherously bled him to death.

Thus he that never feared a sword or a bow, or any man that lived, was basely killed, in letting of blood, and died without a friend to close his eyes. As soon as his men heard of his death, they were filled with grief and dismay, and fled away in haste. Some of them crossed the seas, and went to Flanders, some to France, and some to Spain and Rome.

It is reported that Richard the First created him Earl of Huntingdon immediately after his succession to the throne.

He died the 24th of December, 1247, aged 61, and was interred at Kirkley Park, Yorkshire.

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