Robin Hood and Little John

Anonymous

**When Robin Hood was about twenty years old,
*With a hey down down and a down*
He happend to meet Little John,
A jolly brisk blade, right fit for the trade, For he was a lusty young man.**

**Though he was calld Little, his limbs they were large,
And his stature was seven foot high;
Where-ever he came, they quak'd at his name,
For soon he would make them to fly.**

**How they came acquainted, I'll tell you in brief,
If you will but listen a while;
For this very jest, amongst all the rest,
I think it may cause you to smile.**

**Bold Robin Hood said to his jolly bowmen,
Pray tarry you here in this grove;
And see that you all observe well my call,
While thorough the forest I rove.**

**We have had no sport for these fourteen long days,
Therefore now abroad will I go;
Now should I be beat, and cannot retreat,
My horn I will presently blow.**

**Then did he shake hands with his merry men all,
And bid them at present good b'w'ye;
Then, as near a brook his journey he took,
A stranger he chancd to espy.**

**They happend to meet on a long narrow bridge,
And neither of them would give way;
Quoth bold Robin Hood, and sturdily stood,
I'll show you right Nottingham play.**

**With that from his quiver an arrow he drew;
A broad arrow with a goose-wing:
The stranger reply'd, I'll liquor thy hide,
If thou offerst to touch the string.**

**Quoth bold Robin Hood, Thou dost prate like an ass,
For were I to bend but my bow,
I could send a dart quite thro thy proud heart,
Before thou couldst strike me one blow.**

**'Thou talkst like a coward,' the stranger reply'd;
'Well armd with a long bow, you stand,
To shoot at my breast, while I, I protest,
Have nought but a staff in my hand.'**

**'The name of a coward,' quoth Robin, 'I scorn,
Wherefore my long bow I'll lay by;
And now, for thy sake, a staff I will take,
The truth of thy manhood to try.'**

**Then Robin Hood stept to a thicket of trees,
And chose him a staff of ground oak;
Now this being done, away he did run
To the stranger, and merrily spoke:**

**Lo! see my staff, it is lusty and tough,
Now here on the bridge we will play;
Whoever falls in, the other shall win
The battel, and so we'll away.**

**'With all my whole heart,' the stranger reply'd;
'I scorn in the least to give out;'
This said, they fell to't without more dispute,
And their staffs they did flourish about.**

**And first Robin he gave the stranger a bang,
So hard that it made his bones ring:
The stranger he said, This must be repaid,
I'll give you as good as you bring.**

**So long as I'm able to handle my staff,
To die in your debt, friend, I scorn:
Then to it each goes, and followd their blows,
As if they had been threshing of corn.**

**The stranger gave Robin a crack on the crown,
Which caused the blood to appear;
Then Robin, enrag'd, more fiercely engag'd,
And followd his blows more severe.**

**So thick and fast did he lay it on him,
With a passionate fury and ire,
At every stroke, he made him to smoke,
As if he had been all on fire.**

**O then into fury the stranger he grew,
And gave him a damnable look,
And with it a blow that laid him full low,
And tumbled him into the brook**

**'I prithee, good fellow, a where art thou now?'
The stranger, in laughter, he cry'd;
Quoth bold Robin Hood, Good faith, in the flood,
And floating along with the tide.**

**I needs must acknow ledge thou art a brave soul;
With thee I'll no longer contend;
For needs must I say, thou hast got the day,
Our battle shall be at an end.

Then unto the bank he did presently wade,
And pulled himself out by a thorn;
Which done, at the last, he blowed a loud blast
Straitway on his fine bugle-horn.**

**The eccho of which through the valleys did fly,
At which his stout bowmen appeared,
All clothed in green, most gay to be seen;
So up to their master they steered.**

**'0 what's the matter?' quoth William Stutely;
'Good master, you are wet to the skin:'
'No matter,' quoth he; 'the lad which you see,
In fighting, hath tumbled me in.'**

**'He shall not go scot-free,' the others reply'd;
So straight they were seizing him there,
To duck him likewise; but Robin Hood cries,
He is a stout fellow, forbear.**

**There's no one shall wrong thee, friend, be not afraid;
These bowmen upon me do wait;
There's threescore and nine; if thou wilt be mine,
Thou shalt have my livery straight.**

**And other accoutrements fit for a man;
Speak up, jolly blade, never fear;
I'll teach you also the use of the bow,
To shoot at the fat fallow-deer.**

**'0 here is my hand,' the stranger reply'd,
'I'll serve you with all my whole heart;
My name is John Little, a man of good mettle;
Nere doubt me, for I'll play my part;'**

**His name shall be altered,' quoth William Stutely,
'And I will his godfather be;
Prepare then a feast, and none of the least,
For we will be merry,' quoth he.**

**They presently fetched in a brace of fat does,
With humming strong liquor likewise;
They loved what was good; so, in the green wood,
This pretty sweet babe they baptize.**

**He was, I must tell you, but seven foot high,
And, may be, an ell in the waste;
A pretty sweet lad; much feasting they had;
Bold Robin the christening grac'd.**

**With all his bowmen, which stood in a ring,
And were of the Nottingham breed;
Brave Stutely comes then, with seven yeomen,
And did in this manner proceed.**

**'This infant was called John Little,' quoth he,
'Which name shall be changed anon;
The words we'll transpose, so where-ever he goes,
His name shall be calld Little John.'**

**They all with a shout made the elements ring,
So soon as the office was ore;
To feasting they went, with true merriment,
And tippld strong liquor galore.**

**Then Robin he took the pretty sweet babe,
And cloathd him from top to the toe
In garments of green, most gay to be seen,
And gave him a curious long bow.**

**'Thou shalt be an archer as well as the best,
And range in the greenwood with us;
Where we'll not want gold nor silver, behold,
While bishops have ought in their purse.**

**'We live here like squires, or lords of renown,
Without ere a foot of free land;
We feast on good cheer, with wine, ale, and beer,
And everything at our command.'**

**Then music and dancing did finish the day;
At length, when the sun waxed low,
Then all the whole train the grove did refrain,
And unto their caves they did go.**

**And so ever after, as long as he lived,
Although he was proper and tall,
Yet nevertheless, the truth to express,
Still Little John they did him call.**