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.**