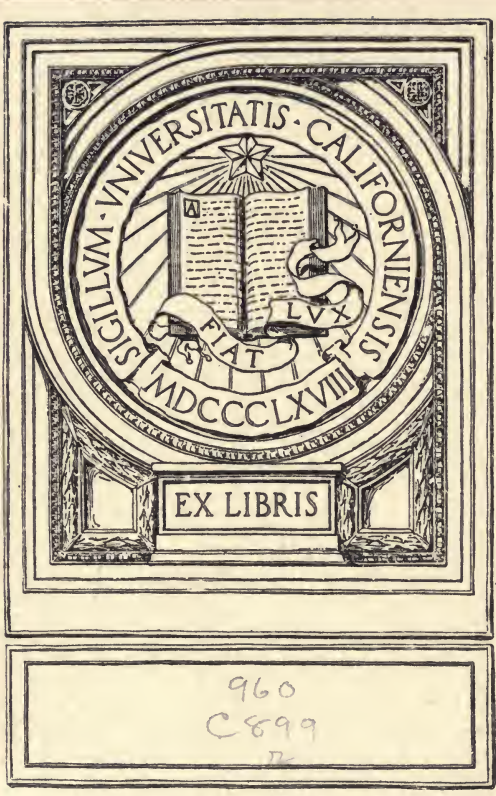


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ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

A COMEDY
IN
THREE ACTS AND FOUR SCENES

By
J. R. CRAWFORD



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ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

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ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

- ACT I. Scene 1. The trysting-place on the
edge of Sherwood Forest. Noon.
Scene 2. The great hall of the castle
of Nottingham. Afternoon.
- ACT II. Sherwood Forest. Robin Hood's
bower. Night.
- ACT III. Nottingham Fair. Before the city
walls. Morning.

The action begins at noon and ends at noon
on the day following.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

King Richard, called the Lion-hearted.

Prince John, the usurper.

The High Sheriff of Nottingham.

Sir Hugh, a knight and follower of Prince John.

Kenneth, brother to the Lady Marian and a relative of King Richard.

Robert, Earl of Huntingdon, known as Robin Hood of Sherwood.

Little John,

Friar Tuck,

George à Greene,

Alan à Dale,

Clym o' the Clough,

William of Cloudesdale,

} Followers of Robin
Hood

Florio, afterwards called Will Scarlet.

A Fool.

A Cook.

A Town Crier.

A Shepherd.

His Boy.

A Tinker.

A Tanner.

Ralph Bobbington, the Sheriff's serving man.

The Prior of York.

The Lady Marian, afterwards called Maid Marian.

Madge, her nurse.

The Abbess of Kirklee.

Foresters, pilgrims, knights, men-at-arms, monks, priests, townspeople, countrymen, tumblers, wrestlers, archers, sellers of wares and performers at the Fair.

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

ACT I

SCENE 1: *The trysting-place on the edge of Sherwood Forest. Noon. A large oak tree occupies the center of the stage. On the right the deep shadows of the forest. To the left is seen, in brilliant sunshine, a far view of Nottingham with its castle towers. As the curtain rises a distant horn is heard to wind. The sound is repeated nearer, and a band of foresters rush in, glancing over their shoulders as they run. The horn sounds for the third time and they disappear into the shadows of the wood as if by magic. The Sheriff of Nottingham and his men enter in close pursuit, passing across the stage. When they are out of sight the foresters reappear, laughing heartily and pointing with scorn and mockery in the direction in which the Sheriff's men have gone. The Shepherd's song is heard and the foresters once more vanish. Enter, from the right, the Shepherd and his Boy.*

Shepherd

[*Speaks with a broad rustic accent.*]

Come along, boy.

[*Points.*]

Yonder's the tower of Nottingham Castle.

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Boy

[*Whining.*]

I'm hungry—and the sun is hot.

[*Throws himself down.*]

I would rest awhile in the shade.

Shepherd

[*Alarmed.*]

Nay, lad, get up! We be still in Sherwood Forest!

[*Looking about.*]

If Robin Hood and his men catch us thou'lt never see Nottingham Fair!

Boy

[*Wearily.*]

“Robin Hood!”—all the way from the sheepfold at Utter Dale it's been “Robin Hood” whenever I would stop.

Shepherd

I tell thee, boy, the forest is not the king's highway—would'st thou have us come to Nottingham Fair as rich as a new shorn sheep? Thinkest thou I've sold my ewes for an outlaw's gain? Marry, get up, lest I beat thee!

[*Threatens.*]

Boy

[*Gets up.*]

I come—I come.

[*Sighs.*]

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Would I were back with the flock upon the hill-side.

[*Sings.*]

With O the broom, the bonny broom,
The broom of Cowdon Knowes;
Fain would I be in the North Country,
To milk my daddy's ewes.

Shepherd

[*With a great effort of his imagination.*]

Think no more o' that! Thou'lt see wonders at
Nottingham Fair, lad. Thou'lt see wonders, I
tell thee.

Boy

[*Impressed.*]

Shall I see the King?

Shepherd

Nay, lad. Men say King Richard has gone to
the wars to fight the heathen.

Boy

[*Open-mouthed.*]

"Heathen"—what's that?

Shepherd

"Heathen," lad?

[*Scratches his head perplexed.*]

They're devils with thick scales upon their bodies
and breathe fire. King Richard will slay them

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

all—then he'll come back and give every poor man a pot of gold. No man shall lack for gear and lands when King Richard comes home again. He'll put Prince John and his men in prison and give their lands to such as I. We'll do naught but feast and drink all day—

Boy

[Who has heard all this before.]

I would he were here—I'm so hungry.

Shepherd

[Irritated.]

You put me out o' patience—ye think of naught else. Come along, thou'rt rested enough.

*[As they are going off, a horn is heard to wind.
It is answered by one near by.]*

Shepherd

[Stops.]

Goda'mercy—heard'st thou that?

Boy

[Without interest.]

A huntsman's horn.

Shepherd

[Awe-struck.]

There's but one hunts in Sherwood. Lad, we're undone! It's Robin Hood!

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

[*Robin Hood steps suddenly from behind the great oak at the back and confronts the Shepherd.*]

Robin Hood

Say you so?

[*The Shepherd and the Boy fall on their knees before him.*]

Nay, fear nothing! Robin Hood bids you welcome to Sherwood!

Shepherd

[*Speaks rapidly in one breath as he fumbles for a little bag which he offers to Robin Hood.*]

It's not much gold I have, my lord. I'm a poor shepherd from Utter Dale and I sold my ewes at the sheep-shearing at Radley,—we're on our way to see the sights at Nottingham Fair—but you're welcome to my purse—a fool's bolt is soon shot—I'll not leave my sheep again for all the fairs in England—only let us go this time, my lord!

Robin

[*Laughing.*]

Call me Robin Hood.

Boy

[*Stepping between them.*]

Don't kill us, please—Robin Hood—we meant

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

no harm—we've not touched the deer nor done you any hurt.

Robin

I am no robber of poor men, Shepherd. Keep your purse, and here's an angel to lend it wings at Nottingham.

[Tosses him a gold coin.]

Go see the fair and bring fair tidings home again. If men would stop you in the forest, show them this feather.

[Gives him a small feather.]

It will open all the greenwood paths to you. And so, off with you—you've but time to reach Nottingham for dinner.

[The Shepherd and Boy bow their thanks and hurry gratefully out. Robin stands center and sounds his horn thrice. Enter Little John, George à Greene, Alan à Dale, Clym o' the Clough and William of Cloudesdale, with other archers and foresters.]

Robin

Welcome, my merry men! Welcome all!

[The men sit and group themselves about the stage.]

Robin

[Turns to Little John.]

Little John—what news with you?

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Little John

A wallet of usurer's gold taken from one of the
Sheriff's clerks.

[*Tosses a bag to the ground.*]

Robin

[*To the next man.*]

George à Greene?

George à Greene

Three palfreys laden with silks and stuffs on
their way to Sir Hugh at Nottingham.

Robin

A lucky chance—we will soon have need of this
booty.

[*Turns to the next man.*]

Alan à Dale?

Alan à Dale

I came across a lover reading a book of sonnets
on the path by Dark Mere.

Robin

What plunder from him?

Alan à Dale

[*Sentimentally.*]

I got the book of sonnets. But I gave him a
sonnet of my own in return and put him safely
on his way.

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Robin

[*Laughs.*]

Alan à Dale, be ever merciful to the distressed wayfarer! Your sonnet is too cruel a punishment.

[*Turns again.*]

Friar Tuck?

[*No answer.*]

Friar Tuck!

[*A pause and Friar Tuck then ambles in. He is a little the worse for drinking Malmsey in a hot sun.*]

Friar Tuck

[*With great pride.*]

Six fat geese and this bottle of old Malmsey.

[*Produces a bottle. Little John takes it from him and tries to drink.*]

Little John

[*Throwing away the bottle in disgust.*]

A scurvy trick was played you, Friar Tuck—the bottle is empty!

Friar Tuck

[*In mock surprise.*]

Marry, it was full when I first had it, Little John. The summer sun has made it waste away. Yet I got it of one who knew good Malmsey. I had all this for sweet charity.

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Little John

[*Scornfully.*]

For charity's sake you began and ended the bottle at home?

Friar Tuck

When the sun is high a man thirsts—think you I can work without drinking? What is a workman without his tools?

Robin

Nay, the matter needs no proof.

[*To the two archers nearest him.*]

Clym o' the Clough and William of Cloudesdale, what have you?

Clym o' the Clough

My arrows have slain six brown deer, Robin.

William of Cloudesdale

There will be no lack of fresh meat tonight.

Together we have killed enough for a feast.

Robin

Good.

[*Addressing all.*]

Here is my capture.

[*Holds up a parchment scroll.*]

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Little John

[Looking eagerly—then with obvious disappointment.]

What is the good of parchments to men who can not read?

Robin

This I took from the envoy of the Abbot of Jourvaultx.

Friar Tuck

Is it a deed to some rich lands?

Robin

Better than that. It is a safe conduct for the bearer to carry him into Nottingham Castle.

Little John

[Starts.]

You are going to the castle?

Robin

[Smiles.]

No—but you are.

Little John

Oh! What mad prank is this?

Robin

No prank but sober earnest. I must claim the hand of the Lady Marian before sunset or break my vow.

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Little John

How now? If you go as outlaw to Nottingham Castle, the Sheriff will hang you, claim you your bride never so boldly.

Robin

Therefore I am not going to the castle. This safe conduct is from the Abbot of Jourvaulx for a grey friar to be present as his envoy at the betrothal of the Lady Marian to Sir Hugh. You, Little John, shall go to Nottingham as the grey friar. Once inside the castle your wit must find the end of the story.

Little John

Marry! A grey friar—do you think I look holy enough? Friar Tuck carries a more devout air with him.

[Friar Tuck snores loudly, having propped himself against the oak.]

Robin

[Turning to look at him.]

It must be you—Friar Tuck has tasted too much Malmsey—my other men are well known in Nottingham.

[Takes a grey robe from one of the men. They dress Little John, who protests.]

Stout archers, hidden in the forest edge, near

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

the castle moat, will be ready when you need their help. Your task is to get the Lady Marian safe away.

Little John

Aye,—it is an easy thing to say. A mole without eyes can see his way in the dark.

Robin

Wear your gown so—and here's the parchment.

Lose it not! If you show the Sheriff of Nottingham the Abbot's seal, hold it thus.

[Shows Little John the right side.]

Do not turn it upside down, or he may grow suspicious of your scholarship. One or two bits of Latin I'll teach you as we go along. Here's gold. Use it freely for it unlocks strange doors. Whatever you do, quarrel with no man! A grey friar is meek and lowly. He does not use his fists, if men call him knave.

Little John

What!—must I not cram the lie down his throat?

Robin

Nay, remember you are a man of peace,—you serve the worthy Abbot of Jourvaulx,—and your task is to rescue the Lady Marian and bring her to the forest. Luck will aid you,

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

for it never forsakes a man who acts boldly. By sundown you will be safe again in Sherwood and the Lady Marian will be by my side.

Little John

But how if my wit fail me—or the plan miscarry?

Robin

Have no fear. Play your part well and carefully and we shall have a good ending of what seems a bad beginning. There are doors to the strongest castle and wit or gold can open them. Go!

[He claps Little John on the back, who goes out left.]

Robin

[Stands looking after him.]

There is no time to lose, men! The sun has passed high noon! Hide you in the forest's edge nearest the castle! Prince John will pass this way to-day to join the Sheriff at Nottingham. Let no man disturb his passage. There's other game afoot. Prince John must gain the castle in peace.

[The men go off under their different leaders. Robin remains alone with Alan à Dale.]

Robin

What tricks love plays us, Alan à Dale! Here

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

am I risking the life of a brave man—and will risk my own to boot—and all to keep my word to a maiden!

Alan à Dale

[*Sighs.*]

It is not too great a price for love. Alas, my love is lost forever——

Robin

[*Hastily.*]

Er—I know—the face seen once and then no more. We must think of to-day, Alan à Dale. I must not break my vow. Would that King Richard were here!

Alan à Dale

This task is too great for Little John. What mean you to do? How can the Lady Marian be saved?

Robin

[*Stands center.*]

I do not know—but love will find a way!

CURTAIN

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

ACT I

SCENE 2: *The great hall of the Castle of Nottingham. Afternoon. A vast room with a massive timber roof. On the right are two doors leading to the other apartments. On the left is a wide opening with a pointed arch. This door opens on a passage leading from the castle gateway. The room is hung with tapestry. Up stage in the middle of the back wall one of the pieces of tapestry serves to conceal a secret panel, through which there is an underground way ending at the forest's edge. To the left of this hidden door is a window overlooking Sherwood and the castle approaches. Down stage and somewhat to the right are two chairs of state on a low dais. When the curtain goes up the stage is empty and there is a moment's pause. Then the Sheriff is heard stumping along one of the corridors. He enters hastily from the right, walking with the aid of a cane.*

Sheriff

[Comes center.]

[Angrily.]

Ralph! Ralph Bobbington!

[Pounds with his stick.]

Am I the Sheriff of Nottingham? No one attends me! Ralph!

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Ralph

[*Off.*]
Coming!

[*Enter Ralph left.*]
Here I am. The hasty man never lacks for trouble.

Sheriff

[*Threatens him with his stick.*]
Pray, sirrah, have you nothing to do but idle about with kitchen wenches? Prince John will soon be here and we must make us ready.

Ralph.

Idling, you call it? 'Faith, I was not idle—I was eating.

Sheriff

Come!—Look to your business!

Ralph

Aye—business,—well, conscience is a cutthroat.

Sheriff

Prince John will sup here to-night, dolt! He comes to see the betrothal of the Lady Marian to Sir Hugh.

Ralph

You say truly. A man should be at his own bridal. The cook has been baking and brewing

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

these seven days—there's but one thing lacking to make Prince John's welcome a royal one.

Sheriff

If it's aught you should have remembered, varlet, your bones shall ache for it. What is it you mean?

Ralph

I was thinking of your promise to show him the head of Robin Hood on a pike over the castle gateway. That item is not in our account.

Sheriff

The outlaw is as good as in my hands. I've a stratagem will prove too much for Robin Hood.

[*Chuckles.*]

The old fox can catch the young hare.

Ralph

Aye, but there's another saying—'tis no use to hunt for a hare with a drum.

Sheriff

Do you answer me, sirrah? Go!—Get you gone! Stay,—send Sir Hugh to me, do you hear?

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Ralph

Aye, my lord.

[Ralph runs out.]

Sheriff

[Shakes his stick after him.]

A saucy knave! To taunt me to my face of
Robin Hood!

*[Stamps up and down the room muttering to
himself. Enter Sir Hugh from the door on
the right.]*

Sir Hugh

You sent for me, Sir Sheriff?

Sheriff

Aye. Have you made your peace with the Lady
Marian?

Sir Hugh

She will not listen to me.

Sheriff

'Tis no matter. Tush! A chit of a girl—a whim!
The Prince will have it so—I tell you she has
no choice.

Sir Hugh

The Prince has humored her delay. She will not
let me speak to her until the year and a day
are up.

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Sheriff

That will be at sunset. This time she shall obey the Prince. Tush! Women are all coy. Put on a bold front. She will yield, I warrant you.

Sir Hugh

Her brother Kenneth upholds her stubborn spirit. She says her troth is plighted to Robin Hood.

Sheriff

An outlaw—a man who tried to worm his way into a title that was not his! Tush! Have no fear of Robin Hood. As for her brother, he will not stand long in your way. We have sure news that King Richard is a prisoner!

Sir Hugh

[*Starts.*]

What do you say? A prisoner?

Sheriff

[*Chuckles.*]

Aye. Think you Prince John will suffer this boy—this Kenneth—to come between him and a throne?

Sir Hugh

[*In amazement still.*]

King Richard a prisoner!

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Sheriff

[*With malicious triumph.*]

His enemies have him fast. He will reign no more in England. Who then will be king? Answer me that!

Sir Hugh

You mean—Prince John?

Sheriff

No less. Dare a boy raise the country against him, think you? And there is a way to make all sure.

Sir Hugh

How say you?

Sheriff

One gallows will bear two outlaws, if need be. Treason is a grievous crime. 'Tis as simple to hang this Kenneth as it was to make an outlaw of Robin Hood.

[*Chuckles.*]

The politic man is full of stratagems.

[*Calls.*]

Ralph! Ralph!

[*To Sir Hugh.*]

We will send for this lady and prepare her for her future. Ralph! Art deaf?

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Ralph

[Ralph's voice off.]

Coming!

[Enter Ralph from the lower door on the right.]

Ralph

You called?

Sheriff

Didst think I was practicing a plain song? Beg the Lady Marian and her brother to wait upon me here.

[Ralph bows and runs out the upper door on the right.]

Sheriff

[Chuckles.]

We shall hear this girl pipe another tune when I bid her prepare for her wedding.

[Ralph comes running back, with a frightened look upon his face.]

Sheriff

How now?

Ralph

May it please your worship, the Lady Marian hath sent this reply: Tell the Sheriff that I am free until sunset.

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Sheriff

[Explodes with rage.]

By the breath of my body, was ever man so plagued with such a shrewish vixen! I wish you joy of your wife, Sir Hugh. I wish you joy!

Sir Hugh

I shall tame her—never fear.

Sheriff

[To Ralph.]

Go, idiot, and tell the Lady Marian that I command her presence here. I command it!

[Ralph runs out.]

To defy me to my face—the world's turned topsy-turvy. When I was a boy, maidens obeyed their elders.

Sir Hugh

The lady is coming.

[Enter Marian followed by her brother Kenneth and Madge, her maid.]

Sir Hugh

[Sweeps the ground with his bow.]

Your humble slave, my lady!

[Marian turns her head and passes him without acknowledging the salute.]

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Marian

[*To the Sheriff.*]

I have come as you bade me. If it is but to speak with Sir Hugh, I pray you grant me leave to return again.

Sheriff

Tut—tut—you must listen to me! Your cousin King Richard is a prisoner. Prince John is now your guardian—

Marian

[*Clings to her brother for support.*]

King Richard—it's a lie! You are trying to trap me!

Sheriff

Tush—child—have patience! I have received letters from Prince John. At sunset he will betroth you to Sir Hugh.

Kenneth

[*Steps forward boldly.*]

My sister is in my care. I refuse my consent to this betrothal!

Sheriff

Your consent, quotha! Belike Prince John will not ask for it. Would you stand against your Prince?

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Kenneth

Aye, if he force my sister to marry against her will!

Marian

Peace, dear brother.

[*To the Sheriff.*]

You forget that it still lacks an hour of sunset.
Till then I am betrothed to Robin Hood——

Sheriff

Tush, what good is it to reason with a woman!
I warned Prince John that it was a silly whim
to humor you in this! Betrothed to an out-
law? A pretty betrothal for a lady of your
degree!

Marian

Who was it made him an outlaw? You had not
dared do this if my cousin King Richard had
been here!

Sheriff

King Richard has naught to do with this.
Prince John now rules in England.

Marian

Even so I have no fear. Before sunset Robin
Hood will keep his word to me.

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Sheriff

Tut—child—Robin Hood you say? You don't know the world. An outlaw cannot be your Robin—or anybody's Robin but the hangman's.

Sir Hugh

This castle has strong walls. What can a handful of foresters do against it?

Kenneth

My sister shall have her way. We are of royal blood—you dare not force her will.

Sheriff

We shall see. Prince John will manage this affair. I have done. Sir Hugh, I wish you every happiness.

[Stamps angrily out of the room, followed by Ralph.]

Sir Hugh

Fairest Lady Marian, I swear on my knighthood that I love you!

Marian

Even Prince John gave me leave to hope till sunset to-day.

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Sir Hugh

Only to cure you of this foolish fancy. Surely you do not believe this outlaw will keep his word?

Marian

Robin Hood is faithful to his king—and to his love. You would betray both.

Sir Hugh

[Comes nearer.]

If to-day comes and goes and there's no word from Robin Hood—what then?

Marian

What then?—why——

[Turns toward her brother.]

Kenneth

Then my duty will not fail.

Sir Hugh

[To Kenneth.]

Take care how you thwart the Prince.

[To Marian.]

Answer me! If Robin Hood does not keep his word?

Marian

As well ask if the sun will not rise tomorrow!

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Sir Hugh

Enough! What fair words cannot win, force shall! When Prince John comes to-day I shall claim your hand,—and we'll hear no more prating of Robin Hood and outlaws.

Marian

Before that time comes——

Sir Hugh

I know—miracles will happen—or else your outlaw will hang from the castle gibbet. To-night you'll be my bride—I make no promise of a year and a day. To-night!

[Strides to lower door right.]

Lady, I give you good day.

[Bows and goes out.]

Marian

[Turns weeping to Madge and Kenneth.]

Alas, if Robin does not come, what shall I do?

Kenneth

Fear nothing, Marian. They dare not touch the cousin of King Richard.

Madge

[To Marian.]

Alack, you must get you another lover! There's more houses than Parish churches. Sir Hugh

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

has a trim leg,—and lives upon more than venison.

Marian

[Stamping her foot.]

I forbid you to speak of Sir Hugh!

Madge

Marry, as you will. But sorrow will pay no debt.
A bird in the hand is worth two Robins in the
greenwood.

Marian

[Turns toward window.]

Oh, if Robin were only here! Where can he be,
I wonder? Could he have forgotten so soon?

Madge

Belike. Men apt to promise are apt to forget.

Marian

It can't be—he will come—I know it.

Madge

Well, maybe so. There's a pot of gold at the
end of the rainbow.

Marian

[Stands by window looking out.]

Robin, Robin, come to me!

*[As she stands there the yellow setting sun
shines on her face.]*

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Marian

[*Suddenly.*]

See!—Something moving under the trees! A figure clad in green! There it is again! Oh, Robin! If the castle guards should see him! Look, Kenneth, Madge! There!

[*Kenneth and Madge hurry to the window.*]

Madge

[*Peers cautiously out of the window.*]

I see nothing—it is the wind rustling among the beech trees.

Kenneth

It was one of the brown forest deer slipping through the underbrush.

[*As he speaks, they draw back and an arrow sings in through the open window. It falls at Marian's feet and she stoops to pick it up with a cry of joy.*]

Madge

[*Recoils awe-struck.*]

St. Hilda shield us—an outlaw's arrow!

[*Kenneth leaps to the casement, but Marian stays him.*]

Marian

[*Holds it up.*]

A blunt arrow—it's a message from Robin Hood! Here about the shaft's a letter.

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

[*Takes it off eagerly.*]

Robin!

[*Kisses the letter with delight.*]

He's kept his promise!

[*She unfolds the letter. Reads.*]

"Maid Marian from Robin Hood. Do not fear. The year and a day is not up until the sun sinks behind the greenwood,—before then you will be by your Robin's side."

[*She dances up and down with joy.*]

Do you hear that, Kenneth? Before sunset I'll be with Robin!

[*Reads.*]

"I am sending my most trusty man, Little John, disguised as a grey friar. He will help us. See him well received—he comes in the guise of an envoy from the Abbot of Jourvaulx to attend your betrothal feast. Pretend to be ready to do as the Prince bids you, and place your trust in Robin." See, see, Kenneth. "Place your trust in Robin!" What's to be done now, I wonder?

Kenneth

Not so loud! If the Sheriff should come in?

Madge

Marry,—wait! Let not Sir Hugh see you thus. He will have you put in the castle keep and

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

then you and your Robin may whistle for one another.

Marian

How will he come? How shall we escape?

Kenneth

Little John will have a plan. Be patient.

Madge

Would you have every lackbrains in the castle know of this? Throw that arrow out of the window.

Marian

Robin's arrow!

[Madge seizes it and throws it out the window.]

Madge

Is this the time to dangle your lover's tokens under Sir Hugh's nose?

Marian

Oh! You are cruel, Madge. Help me to think! If Robin should be seized!

Kenneth

Robin will outwit them. Have they not sought him in vain for a whole year?

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Madge

Aye, but to stick his head in a noose is another matter.

Marian

No! No! He must not fail!

Madge

Ah, who knows? As well a sheep as a lamb, they say. Go to,—I've no patience with the world!

Marian

Dear Madge, can you not think of some way to help us? Is there none loyal to King Richard in this castle?

Madge

King Richard moves them not. Belike they think it a long journey and a perilous from the Holy Land. There's none to seek here.

Marian

[*To her brother.*]

Kenneth, can you think of nothing? This castle is too strong for Robin's men to seize.

Kenneth

He has promised. He is not the man to promise what he cannot do.

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Madge

There's one you might ask, if you would but listen. But when did youth ever think of age?

Marian

[*Excitedly.*]

Who, Madge, who?

Madge

Marry, it was not for nothing I was born in this castle,—go to!

Marian

Tell us, sweet Madge,—and anything you ask shall be yours when King Richard comes back from the wars.

Madge

When beggars are bishops we'll no more go afoot.

Marian

[*Coaxingly.*]

Nay, dear Madge,—thou'lt tell me.

Kenneth

Here is a broad piece of gold, Madge. It's all I have, alas!

Madge

Keep it for some knave that tends your horse.
I want no gold—

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Marian

Haste and tell us, Madge,—there's a dear.

Madge

Beshrew me but you put me all in a flutter!
There's a secret passage——

Marian

[*With a joyous cry.*]
Oh! A secret passage!

Madge

[*Angrily.*]
Nay, rather ring the alarm bell and tell Sir Hugh
your news!

Marian

I will be as still as a mouse, dearest Madge.

Madge

None knows of this secret way but I. It leads
under the moat to the edge of the greenwood.
You must contrive to let your lover's man
know of this when he comes——

Marian

[*Hugs her enthusiastically.*]
Thou art a dear! Thou shalt come with us into
the greenwood.

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Madge

Nay, 'tis no place for a Christian woman. I like not your elves and your goblins and your fairy folk.

Kenneth

Show us where this passage is!

Madge

'Tis not far away.

[A tremendous clanging of the castle bell is heard.]

Madge

Goda'mercy, what is that! We are undone!

[Ralph comes running in from the lower door on the right.]

Ralph

Prince John—and my tasks all unfinished!

[Several men rush in, followed by the Sheriff, the Fool and Sir Hugh.]

Madge

[To Marian.]

Look you utter no word of this secret passage.

[Marian nods her head. The noise of the bell is repeated.]

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Sheriff

See who it is that makes such a devil's din upon
the gateway bell!

*[There is much confusion and the Fool hurries
out the door, left, and returns bowing before
the Sheriff.]*

Fool

An envoy from the Abbot of Jourvaulx, my
lord,—a strapping big man in the garb of a
grey friar who has cracked the bell with ring-
ing it.

Sheriff

Admit the worthy abbot's envoy.

Fool

There will be no keeping him out. Behold!

*[Little John enters from the left in the garb of
a grey friar.]*

Little John

[Strides forward.]

I cry you mercy. This, from the Abbot of Jour-
vaulx!

*[Presents a parchment with great care, obey-
ing Robin Hood's instructions in the man-
ner of presenting it.]*

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Sir Hugh

[*Scowling at him.*]

Kneel, sirrah, in the presence of the High Sheriff.

Little John

[*Staring at Sir Hugh coolly.*]

Your pardon. The seclusion of the cloister has unfitted me for courts.

[*He kneels and instantly gets up again. The Sheriff reads the scroll with a frown and many nods of the head.*]

Sheriff

[*Putting away the scroll.*]

Welcome, Sir Friar. The Abbot commends you to us as a lowly man and a pious. Your blessings on the betrothal of our lovers will bring them much joy.

Little John

I warrant you. That is—I shall choose them some precepts from the store of my learning.

Marian

[*Comes forward.*]

The good friar must be weary from his journey. Have you broken your fast?

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Little John

[With enthusiasm, then checking himself.]

Marry, that I have not—nor tasted a drop to drink—er—a crust and a sup of water from the castle well is a feast for such as I.

Sheriff

Ralph, see the Friar well bestowed. Send for the cook.

[Ralph goes out the lower door, right.]

We but await the coming of Prince John and the Prior of York to set our seal upon this betrothal you have come to witness.

[The Sheriff withdraws up stage as Little John bows awkwardly. Marian comes to the latter's side. She whispers to Little John.]

Marian

Robin? How is he?

Little John

[Glancing around.]

Benedicite, maiden, benedicite.

[Raises one hand over her head. Then hurriedly.]

All is well. The castle is surrounded.

[Very loud.]

Fasting is a grievous penance, my child.

[Whispers again.]

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

We shall let the Prince pass—not a soul will he see in Sherwood. When all is ready here, I'll contrive a signal from the window—the castle will be surprised—and then to the greenwood!

[*Very loud.*]

Aye, you must have faith, my child. Faith can move mountains and even deliver maidens in distress.

[*The Fool has been watching narrowly during the above. He draws Sir Hugh's attention.*]

Sir Hugh

[*Comes forward.*]

Your office is a somewhat long-winded one, friar?

Little John

A long wind is needed to race with sin, my lord.

Sir Hugh

[*Peremptorily.*]

Come, Lady Marian, get you to your chamber.

Marian

Pray do not husband me, Sir Hugh, until we are wed. My wishes are still my own. I find much comfort in this holy man's counsel.

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Sir Hugh

The friar will rebuke your disobedient spirit.

Marian

Have you no affairs of your own, Sir Hugh?
Your hunting dogs—do they lack for nothing?
[*Sir Hugh turns on his heel with a muttered
exclamation and goes out the door on the
right.*]

Little John

We must talk no longer. Yonder Fool suspects
us.

Marian

One word—we shall have help within the walls.
There's secret passage—leads to the edge of
the forest.
[*The Fool comes forward.*]

Fool

Friar, your eloquence can do more than my wit.

Little John

How so?

Fool

My wit makes the Lady Marian yawn, but your
sermons make her eyes sparkle.
[*Enter Ralph and the Cook from the lower
door, right, with assistants bringing in a
table.*]

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Sheriff

Lady Marian, let us leave the good friar to his dinner. He has come a long journey. Kenneth, prepare you to greet Prince John with all ceremony.

Marian

We shall obey, my lord.

[Marian and Kenneth go toward the upper door, right, followed by Madge.]

Sheriff

A chastened spirit—hum—'tis very well, very well, indeed—and not too soon.

Fool

I shall stay to wait upon this—er—holy man. I wish to see what appetite he has brought with him.

[Marian, Kenneth, Madge, Sheriff, Ralph and attendants go out, leaving the Cook, the Fool and Little John. The latter seats himself at the table. The Fool sits on one corner of it, and the Cook hovers about.]

Fool

A stoop of liquor, sirrah?

[Holds up a huge jug and a very small cup.]

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Little John

Aye, with a good will.

[Takes the jug from the Fool's hands and drinks a huge draught.]

Fool

[Takes jug and holds it upside down to show it is empty.]

If there's virtue in good liquor, now thou art a virtuous man, friar.

[Sighs.]

For a thirst like that I would gladly exchange my cap and bells for your grey gown. That a friar should teach me what thirst is!

Little John

See to it you keep your wit dry, Fool, lest it be drowned.

Cook

[Offering a huge dish.]

What say you to a piece of this venison pasty?

Little John

Why—that venison is excellent meat.

[Holds his plate. The Cook helps him generously.]

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Fool

[With meaning as he jabs a knife into a piece of meat.]

This deer—

[Holds up a chunk.]

was lawfully slain, friar.

Little John

It should have the better savor. I warrant it was none of your killing.

Cook

We must hunt afar to get good venison. There's no deer left near the castle. Robin Hood and his crew have driven them all away.

Fool

[Laughs and thrusts a finger at Little John.]

You hear that, friar? Robin Hood and his crew!

Little John

[Pretending unconcern.]

What of them?

Fool

[Pours out wine.]

Why, we'll drink a toast to them, friar. What say you?

[Hands a cup to the Cook and takes one himself.]

To Robin Hood and the day he will swing!

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Cook

[*Fervently.*]

Aye,—may it be soon!

[*Little John springs to his feet and dashes the cup from the Cook's mouth.*]

Fool

How now, friar? Did that bolt strike home?

Little John

No man shall drink that toast—

Cook

[*Strikes Little John.*]

Have at you for a traitor, friar!

[*Little John returns the Cook's blow with interest. They grapple.*]

Fool

[*Dances about them with delight.*]

This is worth a king's ransom! Trip his heels, friar! Aye, there you had him, Cook. To it with a will, lads! The holy man wields a stout fist.

[*They continue to struggle about the stage, overturning a chair.*]

Fool

What a madman's prank is this! Out of the frying pan into the fire, Cook! Well hit, friar—hollo,—how now?

[50]

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

[*Little John disposes of the Cook in a final struggle and the latter drops senseless at his feet. Little John throws back his gown, revealing his green costume beneath. He pulls out a fair-sized dagger and stands facing the Fool.*]

Fool

[*Roars with laughter.*]

You play the part of friar but ill, Goodman Forester. No man has ever got the better of Sir Cook in fair fight before. Nay, put up your knife—and hide your green hose. Think you that I, a Fool, will spoil your sport? I shall live to make a jest of your hanging.

Little John

For a groat I would slit your gullet, Fool.

Fool

[*Getting the table between them.*]

I make no doubt you would do it for love. Get me this Cook to his kitchen and lay him among his pots and pans. We can swear it was Malmsey wine and no friar's fist that wrought this havoc.

Little John

[*To the Fool.*]

And what will you do,—betray me to the Sheriff?

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Fool

I am no such fool as that. Let the Sheriff look to his own. Care killed a cat—should I then trouble about the Sheriff's business? Tell your Robin Hood to choose him some other friar. You play the part too vilely.

[Fool takes the Cook's heels.]

Come,—come,—another taste of your strength. Sir Outlaw, heave me this carcass into the buttery and let him cool his heels there until his senses return.

[Little John and the Fool pick up the Cook.]

Little John

How if turnspit betray me then?

Fool

We'll swear he was drunk. 'Twill seem no marvel in his case. He's often so.

[They carry off the Cook through the lower door, right. A distant trumpet flourish is heard. Enter a man-at-arms from the left. He hurries across and goes out, right. Another flourish nearer. The Sheriff enters right, with Sir Hugh, followed by numerous attendants. Ralph comes in and soon after Little John and the Fool.]

Sheriff

Take away that table.

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

[*The table is hastily cleared away.*]

Prince John is coming! Bestir yourselves, dolts.
My robes of office,—quick, my Sheriff's chain!
Is nothing ready?

[*Confusion and bustling about. Ralph fetches the Sheriff's chain while another places a crimson and ermine cloak about him. The mace is brought in.*]

Sheriff

Don't stand there gaping like gawks on a market day! Ralph,—see my men-at-arms well placed! There needs some ceremony to receive a prince. Hold up your heads,—do you think the Prince will lay a stick across your shoulders that you look like whipped curs?

[*A flourish of trumpets near at hand. The drawbridge is heard to fall.*]

Greet his highness with a will! Sir Hugh, conduct Prince John to our presence.

[*Sir Hugh goes out the door on the left.*]

Sheriff

[*Arranging his robes.*]

Hold you my train when I advance to receive his highness,—and look you do not trip or bungle.

[*Two men station themselves behind the Sheriff. Prince John, preceded by attendants and accompanied by the Prior of York and Sir Hugh, enters. A standard is borne be-*

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

fore him. His men-at-arms and archers are numerous. The Sheriff advances to meet him and kneels before him, center.]

Prince

Arise, High Sheriff of Nottingham.

Sheriff

Welcome, your highness, welcome to your Castle of Nottingham.

Prince

Sheriff, we commend your zeal in office. We have passed through Sherwood Forest and not a trace of the outlaw Robin Hood nor his men did we see. Have you laid this robber by the heels?

Sheriff

Er—as yet he eludes my pursuit—but I have a stratagem which I learned in the wars—

Prince

A stratagem? My commands were to bring me here his head. I asked for no stratagems.

Sheriff

True, your highness—it is even so. And yet stratagems are most useful in war.

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Prince

Have you then remained shut up in this castle fearing to stir abroad because of an outlaw in the woods?

Sheriff

Marry, to wait for him to attack is an excellent device, warranted by the example of a famous Roman general.

Prince

Meanwhile he plunders at will the countryside and slays our deer.

Sheriff

The greater the crime, the greater the punishment.

John

Enough. In three days you will seize this Robin Hood or forfeit your office. And now to other matters. Let the Lady Marian be sent for!

Sheriff

It shall be done, my lord.

[To Ralph.]

Send to the Lady Marian. Say Prince John would speak with her.

[Ralph goes out the upper door, right.]

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

John

The holy Prior of York has come to give his aid
to our ceremony.

Sheriff

Welcome to Nottingham.

Prior

We thank you, Sir Sheriff.

John

Sir Hugh, my faithful knight, are you prepared
to accept the hand of the Lady Marian?

Sir Hugh

I am, my lord, with your consent.

John

That is well. Freely we grant our consent to this
union in return for the many warlike services
you have rendered us.

*[Enter Marian, Kenneth, Madge, Ralph and
women attendants. She comes forward and
curtsies dutifully before the Prince.]*

John

Lady Marian, you see we have kept our word.
It is one year and a day since we yielded to
your whim and gave you leave to await the

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

pleasure of this Robin Hood, pretended Earl of Huntingdon. In that time he has not made good his claim to his earldom and therefore has forfeited his life for his false pretenses. We absolve you from the vow he made you swear to him. And now we call upon you to accept the hand and troth of our trusty knight, Sir Hugh. What say you, Lady Marian?

Kenneth

[Steps forward.]

She is my sister and I have a right to answer for her! I refuse my consent to this betrothal!

John

[Calmly.]

I am your elder and a better adviser. Since King Richard cannot be here to bestow this lady's hand, the task falls to me.

Marian

The sun has not set. I claim your promise to the very letter. The year and a day is not up until sunset.

John

The sands have not many minutes to run. Think you it is possible for Robin Hood to seek you here?

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Marian

[*With deep conviction.*]

Yes. He will keep his word. If he does not, you may betroth me at sunset to Sir Hugh.

Kenneth

Sister!—what are you saying?

Marian

Peace, brother. I am not afraid.

Sir Hugh

[*To Ralph.*]

Watch you at the window—and when the sun dips behind Sherwood inform us quickly.

[*Ralph goes to the window.*]

Sheriff

Come,—enough of this childish folly. Let the Prior begin.

Sir Hugh

Crave your patience, good Sheriff. Let us satisfy the lady.

Ralph

[*At window.*]

The last gleam of the sun has faded.

[*Marian covers her face sobbing. Little John strides forward but Kenneth lays a hand upon him and he pauses.*]

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

John

Worthy Prior, we need tarry no longer. Join their hands.

[*The Prior comes forward and takes Sir Hugh and Marian by the hand.*]

John

Sir Hugh, for the love you have shown your prince, I entrust into your keeping, our cousin, the Lady Marian.

Madge

[*Comes forward.*]

Have you no pity for a young child's heart? Do you call yourself a prince—you usurper whom the people hate as they do the adder that lurks in the bracken? Look to yourself, Prince John, when King Richard comes back from the wars!

[*Commotion. The Prior releases Marian's hand.*]

John

Seize the old shrew, and have her soundly whipped!

Marian

No!—she knows not what she says. Let her go in peace,—and I will obey,—I'll do anything you ask!

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

John

So be it. See that she keeps a quiet tongue.

[*Guards release Madge.*]

Marian

[*Kneels.*]

Do not be angry at an old woman's love. I—I
am ready.

[*She rises and faces Sir Hugh.*]

John

Proceed, reverend Prior.

[*The Prior again joins their hands.*]

Prior

Do you, Sir Hugh Lacy, accept this maiden, the
Lady Marian, as your affianced wife?

Sir Hugh

I do.

Prior

Do you, Lady Marian, accept this knight, Sir
Hugh, as——

[*A horn is heard to wind, repeated several
times.*]

Several Shout

Robin Hood! Robin Hood!

[60]

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Sheriff

Man the battlements! What ho, there! To your posts! Ring the alarm bell!

[The bell is rung with tremendous clamor and men rush hither and thither.]

John

Sir Hugh, are your men armed?

Sir Hugh

They are, my lord.

[The alarm bell ceases.]

Ralph

[At window.]

See! A fugitive! Robin Hood's crew pursue a man flying from the forest! They gain upon him! Ah! An arrow sang by his ears! He is running for the castle!

Sheriff

Lower the drawbridge! Take enough archers to hold the gateway!

Ralph

He stumbles—he has fallen! They are upon him! No, he is up again!

[The drawbridge is heard to rattle as several more men run out.]

Now he is at the bridge. He is saved! The outlaws flee back into the forest!

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

John

Let none pursue at dusk! On the morrow we
will avenge this insult!

*[One goes out to carry this order. Enter
Robin Hood completely disguised in an old
pilgrim's coat with a cowl hiding his face.
As he enters, he stumbles and sinks as if
exhausted.]*

Robin Hood

Water! I pray you give me water!

[Little John holds a flask to his lips.]

Robin Hood

Thanks, worthy friar! That outlaw Robin Hood
had all but done for poor Ned the Pilgrim.

*[Marian would press close to Robin Hood, but
Little John gives her a meaning look, and
she clasps her hands while a look of great
joy comes into her face. Little John helps
Robin Hood center.]*

John

Goodman Ned, the Pilgrim, 'tis not every man
who falls into Robin Hood's clutches can boast
of his escape. How came this?

Robin Hood

[Pretending to mistake the Prince.]

Please, Sir Knight—

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Sheriff

On your knees, sirrah, 'tis Prince John himself
who speaks to you.

Robin Hood

[*Kneels.*]

Your pardon, my lord, I knew you not.

John

Granted. Rise and tell us how you came by this
adventure.

Robin Hood

Alas, I am but a poor pilgrim. Was I to know
that Robin Hood would plunder a pious man
who only hoped to reach Nottingham at sun-
set?

Sheriff

Tut—man! Your story—time passes and we
have other fish to fry.

Robin Hood

In good time—Sir What-ever-you-be—

Sheriff

[*Snaps.*]

The High Sheriff of Nottingham!

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Robin Hood

My blessing on that name! As you say—my tale shall soon be told. I am a pilgrim but new come from foreign lands after many wanderings too tedious to relate.

Sheriff

Aye—to your adventures to-day.

Robin Hood

It chanced my way to Nottingham lay through Sherwood Forest. Surely, thought I, there can be no harm come to a poor pilgrim. What say you, Lady?

Marian

I am listening—

[Little John and Kenneth draw closer to Marian. The men-at-arms fall back gradually from the window and the secret door, so the audience do not observe that the way there is clear.]

Robin Hood

As I wended along the forest glades I saw the sun was sinking. I must be at Nottingham Castle by sunset, said I, or I shall break my vow.

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

John

What vow, worthy pilgrim?

Robin Hood

Have I not told you I came from Nottingham
before I set forth on my wanderings?

Sheriff

You have been a long time telling us nothing.

Robin Hood

You put me from my purpose. A year ago I
made a vow my journey should end at sunset
today. The glow of the sun was still to be
seen on the moat when I reached your castle
walls.

Sheriff

But how came you to meet Robin Hood? We
know well enough when the sun sets it is dark.

Robin Hood

You say truly. Suddenly from a thicket an ar-
row shot past my head! No warning came
first—but a second arrow followed. My pal-
frey fell struck through the heart. From the
forest depths I heard horns wind and men in
green swarmed beneath the trees. I sprang
to my feet—unhurt by my fall—and ran as

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

runs the deer before a pack of hounds! Men shouted, "Yield, knave, to Robin Hood!"—but I heeded them not! On I sped.

Marian

Yes—yes! What then?

Robin Hood

Anon, as I reached the forest edge—I saw the castle walls before me. Arrows fell about me here and there or whistled by overhead. I dodged from tree to tree until I reached the open—free of scathe. And then—

All

What?

Robin Hood

There stood before me one taller than the rest—all clad in Lincoln green. Him I knew at a glance! It was Robin Hood!

All

Ah!

Robin Hood

By the edge of the wood he took his stand—and cried "Hold!" to me. I but ran the faster—onwards toward the castle. I saw men upon the battlements and answering arrows passed me. "Courage, Ned, the way is short!"—I

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

cried aloud in fear and agony! And then I fell!

Ralph

Aye,—we saw thee fall.

Robin Hood

Quick as thought I was upon my feet again. I neared the drawbridge, and as I turned, thus I saw Robin Hood stand!

[Takes a bow and arrows from a gaping archer.]

And thus he bent his bow upon me!

[Flings off his disguise and stands revealed as Robin Hood. Quickly putting an arrow in place he faces them.]

The first man that moves will send my arrow through the Prince!

[Tableau. Little John and Kenneth seize Marian. Madge screams.]

Madge

[Screaming.]

This way!

[They go to the secret panel, which she reveals.]

Madge

Quick—through the secret passage to the green-wood!

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Little John

[*Throws off his garb and draws his dagger.*]
Here—to the secret passage—Robin Hood!

[*Little John and Marian slip out and Robin Hood backs after them as a man-at-arms creeps up to one side. Kenneth hurls himself upon the man-at-arms as he is about to fell Robin. The door closes too soon for Kenneth to escape. The door is charged, but does not yield. Kenneth is a prisoner while the others beat helplessly against the locked panel.*]

John

After them, Sir Hugh. Mount and ride!

QUICK CURTAIN

ACT II

Sherwood Forest. Robin Hood's bower the same night. An open space deep in a woodland glade. The dragon's oak, a huge tree, stands a little to the left of center. Its overspreading branches form a natural roof, through which the moonlight filters in ragged patches. The ground is covered with soft turf and moss sloping up to the great roots of the dragon's oak. Outside the circle lighted by straggling moonbeams and the flicker of a camp-fire the shadows are very dark. Before the fire, which is down stage and somewhat to the right, are discovered, as the music dies away, George à Greene and Alan à Dale. The former is repairing a bow which he bends and tests from time to time. Near him hangs the carcass of a deer suspended from a branch of the dragon's oak. Alan à Dale lies on the ground kicking his heels and gazing into the fire.

Alan à Dale

[Rolling over and sitting up.]

The moon has passed over the dragon's oak—and there's no sign of Robin.

[He listens a moment.]

There's not a sound in all the forest stillness.

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

George à Greene

Lose you no sleep for that, Alan à Dale. Lord—
that we had been with him!

[*Laughs.*]

I would have given a thousand pound of some
Abbot's money to have seen their faces when
Robin carried off the lass!

Alan à Dale

[*Slight pause, sentimentally.*]

Fortunate man to venture his life for his love!
George à Greene, have you ever suffered the
pangs of love for a face seen but once, then
lost and gone forever?

George à Greene

[*Scratches his head.*]

There was a lass in Wakefield town, you know
the saying, women in mischief are wiser than
men? I put her father's cow in the pound for
trampling neighbor Hodge's corn. She never
looked me in the face again. Ah, well, like will
to like, quoth the devil to the collier. She mar-
ried the Blue Lion in Barnesdale, a fellow with
a hundred pound——

[*Sighs.*]

Alan à Dale

[*Sighs in sympathy.*]

Alas, the story of true love makes but a woeful
ballad!

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

George à Greene

[Pokes fire vigorously—glances up into the sky.]

The night air is chill for a lady bred in a castle.

Fetch some more logs against Robin's coming.

[Listens carefully.]

Heard you aught?

Alan à Dale

[Listens.]

The hoot of an owl—Friar Tuck's call.

[The noise is repeated nearer. Alan à Dale gives an answering cry. Enter Friar Tuck from the left. George à Greene is ready with a bow and arrow until he is certain of the Friar's identity.]

Alan à Dale

[Seizing Friar Tuck by the arm.]

Robin Hood and Lady Marian? Where are they?

Friar Tuck

[Very much out of breath.]

Ask me no questions—

[Sinks down by the fire.]

Lord, here was a night for an honest thief to stir abroad!

[Gasps for air.]

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

George à Greene

[*Offers a leathern bottle.*]

Let this loosen your tongue and cool the heat of
your body.

[*Friar Tuck drinks gratefully.*]

Friar Tuck

[*Shaking his head deprecatingly.*]

By my faith, I am sorry for this night's work.

[*Hands back the empty bottle with a regretful
air.*]

George à Greene

[*Impatiently.*]

Aye, the thief is sorry he is to be hanged, not
that he is a thief. Did Robin get the lass?

[*Friar Tuck is gloomily silent.*]

Come, answer! The bird that can sing and won't,
must be made to.

[*George à Greene shakes him violently, but
Friar Tuck majestically waves him away.*]

Friar Tuck

In good time, George à Greene. Three leagues
is a journey for a summer's night.

Alan à Dale

Where left you Robin Hood?

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Friar Tuck

I know not where he may be. It was a wicked night's work. Have you more drink to your hand, George à Greene?

George à Greene

A curse on your thirst!—has any harm come to Robin?

[George à Greene flings a small bottle at Friar Tuck's feet.]

Friar Tuck

Marry, I know not what you call harm.

[Picks up the little bottle and drinks deliberately.]

Harm, quotha? You may well say so.

[Smacks his lips and eyes the bottle critically.]

Alan à Dale

[In great alarm.]

What? Then——

George à Greene

Speak, man! Is he wounded—or dead?

Friar Tuck

Nay, you spoke of harm. Is it no harm for an outlaw to risk his neck for a woman? Should I, Friar Tuck, venture myself in such a cause?

[Holds up his garment which has a hole in it.]

See you this hole in my gown?

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

George à Greene

Aye, there was a fat calf nearly slain.

Friar Tuck

A Norman arrow did that mischief—because, forsooth, a pretty face is now the game we hunt.

A plague on such outlawry!

[Friar Tuck takes another lengthy drink.]

Alan à Dale

Did Robin get safe away?

Friar Tuck

Marry, it was each man for himself and devil take the hindmost when Sir Hugh and his knights rode out of the castle.

[Sighs.]

It was an ill business.

Alan à Dale

What happened?

Friar Tuck

No great thing. Robin, with Marian and Little John, reached the thicket beyond the fen where the horsemen could not pursue. Then it was they spied me.

George à Greene

Robin and Little John?

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Friar Tuck

Nay, Sir Hugh and his men.

George à Greene

[Roars with laughter.]

I would have given a usurer's ransom to have seen you then! Made you good speed, Friar Tuck?

Friar Tuck

Aye, but God hath done His part. I found me a hollow tree in the shadow of a steep bank that served my turn passing well. They were chary of venturing far in the dark.

Alan à Dale

Where is Sir Hugh now?

Friar Tuck

Gone back to carry news of his hunting to Prince John and the Sheriff.

[A noise is heard in the thicket and all seize their weapons. Enter Clym o' the Clough, William of Cloudesdale and two or three others.]

Clym

Make up the fire! Robin and his lady are coming. George à Greene, he bade me tell you to have plenty of food and good cheer.

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

[*George à Greene takes down the carcass of the deer and carries it off to the right. Friar Tuck alone has not become excited. He falls asleep by the camp fire.*]

William of Cloudesdale

[*In carrying wood to the fire, he stumbles over Friar Tuck.*]

Goda'mercy! How came Friar Tuck here before us?

Friar Tuck

[*Opening his eyes.*]

A good man that comes too late is good for nothing.

[*Goes to sleep again.*]

Clym

We have come as fast as we could, but that fat Friar's fears would outrun a deer.

[*Robin's horn is heard to wind.*]

Alan à Dale

Robin! At last!

[*George à Greene hurries in.*]

George à Greene

Prepare the table! Look to the fire! Rouse you, Friar Tuck!

[*The fire is stirred, a table prepared under the dragon's oak and Friar Tuck is prodded in-*

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

effectually. Through it all he sleeps. Robin Hood's horn sounds near by and his archers begin to arrive. As they dispose themselves about the stage, Robin Hood enters, escorting the Lady Marian. Behind him comes Little John, while two archers are seen to have the Fool with them as prisoner. Robin helps Marian to a seat under the dragon's oak. She is much exhausted. Alan à Dale brings her a cup, which Robin puts to her lips.]

Robin

Drink! It will refresh you.

Marian

[Recovers a little and looks about her.]

What is this place? Where are we?

Robin

This is my bower in Sherwood. We are safer here than in a castle.

Marian

But Kenneth—my brother. He was left behind!

Robin

Nay, weep not—we will devise some means to pluck him from his prison. Think no more of this to-night, but rest you.

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

[*Little John has taken charge of the Fool. Robin stays up stage ministering to Marian during the following.*]

Little John

What shall I do with the prisoner?

Fool

Prisoner, quotha? Did I serve you as I might have when you broke the Cook's pate? Call you me prisoner?

Little John

I know not what you call yourself. You were with Sir Hugh's knights that pursued us for our lives. A rope will best answer that argument.

Fool

May a man not stir abroad to see the world but he must be told he was the cause of it all? Am I to blame for the theft of the Lady Marian or for Sir Hugh's pursuit? Go to!

Little John

It was you led me on to fight the Cook, which came like to betray our plan. It is enough to make me put an arrow through each patch of your motley.

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

[Jabs his finger into the center of several of the different colored squares of the Fool's costume. The latter winces in fear each time. In trying to avoid Little John he falls over Friar Tuck, who awakes with a start.]

Friar Tuck

[Thickly.]

What scurvy knave is this that tramples on the dignity of a holy friar? I was dreaming of—of paradise—and he woke me.

Fool

[Very frightened.]

Cry you mercy, worthy friar.

Friar Tuck

There is no mercy for the foolish—who are you?

Little John

A prisoner. This Fool serves the Sheriff of Nottingham.

Friar Tuck

And we stand talking thus with him? Away, Fool—away! Bind him to that tree!

Fool

Saving your honors—what have I done?

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Friar Tuck

Stop his mouth, too. It vexes me to hear him.
Bind and gag him.

[The Fool is led to the left and laid on the ground. A gag is put in his mouth and he is bound.]

Little John

Leave him there. He will not escape. I've trussed him like the carcass of a deer.

[They sit by the Fool and amuse themselves teasing him in dumb show. Food and drink are meanwhile being brought in by George à Greene, Alan à Dale and the others. Marian has recovered partly from her fatigue. She and Robin are sitting together under the dragon's oak.]

Robin

Little John, sit you here by my side.

[Little John rises and crosses the stage.]

Gather around me, my merry men! Well have you served me this day! Now we must crown our queen!

[Several men shout and cheer. They crowd to the center of the stage.]

Robin

A garland of May blossoms to crown our queen!

[Several men bring handfuls of May blossoms]

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

*and strew them around Marian's feet.
Robin Hood twists a garland and places it
on her head.]*

Robin Hood

I, Robin Hood, lord of Sherwood Forest by the grace of my stout band of archers, do crown thee, Maid Marian, queen of my merry men, and admit you to all the rights and privileges of the greenwood!

All

[Shout.]

Hail to Maid Marian, queen of the May!

Marian

I thank you, foresters, for your greeting.

[They cheer.]

What I can do with Robin's help to serve you, I will!

[They cheer again.]

Robin Hood

This fair recruit must be received with all the due rites of our outlaw band. First of all, I again renounce my title of Earl of Huntingdon until King Richard give it me back. Let me be known simply by the name of Robin Hood.

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

All

[*Shout.*]
Robin Hood!

Robin Hood

This lady shall be called Maid Marian. No title else of rank must any man presume to use whilst we dwell in the forest.

All

[*Shout.*]
Maid Marian!

Robin Hood

Keep well our rules. No traveler whom you meet shall you let pass till he has fought and feasted with Robin Hood, except he be a carrier bringing food to a market-town.

All

[*Shout.*]
We obey!

Robin Hood

Never do a poor man wrong, nor spare a priest, a usurer, or a clerk.

All

[*Shout.*]
Aye!

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Robin Hood

Last of all, you shall defend with all your power,
maids, widows, wives and orphans.

All

[*Shout.*]

As we are true men!

Robin

Thus you see, Marian, though we want for
courtly pleasures, yet a merry life and merry
sport in Sherwood are not scant.

Marian

Having you, Robin, there is nought else to wish
for.

Robin

Next you must learn to know our band. Stand
forth, Little John, my chiefest helper and my
friend. I find counsel in his strong right arm,
which serves us both when wit fails. He is
better at cracking skulls than wearing a grey
friar's weeds.

[*Little John kneels to Marian, then rises.*]

Little John

Would I had served Sir Hugh as I served the
Sheriff's Cook—there would have been some
reason for playing the grey friar then.

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Robin

[*Laughs.*]

Another time—for good luck comes by cuffing.

[*Little John retires.*]

George à Greene!

[*George kneels before Marian.*]

Robin

This man was sometime pinner of Wakefield—he kept the pound for cattle that strayed upon the common. But neighbors' horses seldom found their way out again,—unless to the fair at the next town. Being thus penny-wise and pound-foolish he sought the shelter of Sherwood.

[*George retires.*]

Clym o' the Clough and William of Cloudesdale, kneel to Maid Marian!

[*They do so, coming from among Robin's men.*]

These are the greatest archers of all the north country. They can split a hazel twig at fifty paces.

[*They retire.*]

Now we come to the meat in the chestnut—Friar Tuck, add your blessing.

[*He is asleep.*]

Friar Tuck!

[*He awakes with a start.*]

Your blessing!

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

[*Friar Tuck comes forward with a grunt, and makes as if to kneel.*]

Nay, we give you leave to stand. Do not put your knees to such unwonted uses!

[*To Marian.*]

This is a true friar, yet one who finds the greenwood more to his liking than the cloister. He maintains sack and sugar be better than sackcloth and ashes.

Friar Tuck

It is easy to let the tale run as it pleaseth the teller. A man's country is where he lives well—and there his duty lies.

Robin

[*Laughing.*]

Would every man did his duty as honestly as Friar Tuck.

[*Friar Tuck retires.*]

Robin

[*Points to Alan à Dale.*]

There stands the saddest of my merry men! Alan à Dale, tell Maid Marian how you find your greatest joy in a lament for your lost love.

Marian

Mock not a lover, Robin, lest you mock yourself.

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Robin

I but commend him. Love is such sweet tyranny. Let him be happy in his misery.

Alan à Dale

Alas, Maid Marian, the pang that struck my heart when I saw her face!

Marian

Who is this maid? Robin shall help you win her.

Alan à Dale

My life for your kindness. I know her not—I saw her face but once and 'twas gone forever——

Marian

Tell me more of your love!

Robin

The hour is late—to-morrow is another day.

[The Pilgrims are heard singing faintly in the distance. Several men start to their feet and seize their weapons.]

Marian

[Frightened, clinging to Robin.]

What is that? Sir Hugh and his knights?

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Robin

Do not be frightened. No harm can reach us here. Little John, take you some archers and see who these night-wanderers may be.

[Little John, George à Greene, Alan à Dale and a number of foresters go out toward the right as the noise of the singing comes nearer.]

Robin

My bow and arrows, Friar Tuck.

[The latter hands him a bow.]

Friar Tuck

Marry, who can they be who know so little of Robin Hood that they go chanting about Sherwood Forest by night?

Marian

If it were some trap of the Sheriff and his men?

Robin

He would be the first game taken. Have no fear—these are strangers to the forest.

[The singing is now very near. Enter George à Greene running.]

George à Greene

Robin, they are a band of pilgrims passing on their way to some shrine. Shall we stop them?

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Robin

I like not the hour nor the road they choose for travel. Bid them stand. I'll see more of this.
[*George à Greene runs out. The singing ceases abruptly as one of the foresters' horns is heard to wind.*]

Robin

[*Listening.*]
They yield without a fight.
[*Cries of women, protests and some confusion heard off.*]
Tell Little John to use all gently, Friar Tuck.
[*Friar Tuck goes out, after being roughly aroused by a forester, and the clamor dies away. Little John and an archer return.*]

Little John

Shall we lead them here, Robin?

Robin

Bring me their leader and any of quality. Guard the others closely.
[*Little John goes off but immediately returns with Friar Tuck leading an Abbess, a Tanner, a Tinker and Florio Gamwell. They stand before Robin.*]

Robin

[*Surveying the motley throng.*]
What masking or May game is this?

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Tinker

[*Cringing and bowing.*]

Please you, Sir King of the Fairies, I am Wat the Tinker, of Banbury—this man, look you, Sir Oberon, is Dick the Tanner, from Purley Common; we but go on a pilgrimage meaning no harm to your kingdom nor to the fairy folk.

Abbess

[*In acid tones.*]

Silence, fool, these are no fairies, but outlaws defying the king's peace. If you do not grant us passage without let or hindrance I know one shall make you smart for it! The Sheriff of Nottingham!

[*Robin and his men laugh at the mention of the Sheriff's name.*]

Marian

[*Putting a hand on Robin's arm.*]

Use all gently, Robin.

Little John

[*Using the Tinker's neck as an illustration.*]

The Sheriff of Nottingham will not venture his neck in Sherwood.

Robin

Have no fear, madam.

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Abbess

A parcel of scurvy knaves!—do you know who I am, sirrah?

Little John

It comes more in question to ask who this man is.

[*Indicates Robin Hood.*]

Tinker

[*Obsequiously.*]

Do not anger the King of the Fairies, your ladyship, or he will send sprites to pinch us black and blue.

Abbess

Idiot! Know you not a thief by his hang-dog air? These forest-skulkers that live by pillage, do you think to frighten me with such tag-rag people? I am the Abbess of Kirklee!
[*She strikes an attitude, but nothing happens.*]

Tinker

[*Bowing to Robin.*]

She said she was the Abbess of Kirklee.

Little John

Silence, dog!

[*Threatens him with a dagger.*]

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Tinker

Your mastership's pardon—I am only a poor tinker of Banbury. I—I meant no harm, Sir Hobgoblin.

Little John

Zounds! Call me no hobgoblin, if you hope to ply your trade a whole man!
[*He cuffs the Tinker, who howls.*]

Robin

Peace! Madam, we mean you no harm. But since there are enemies of mine who seek my life in this forest, I must know who comes and goes. That you are the Abbess of Kirklee is sufficient. Who or what are these with you?

Abbess

Let them answer for themselves. I must to Nottingham.

Tinker

We are poor pilgrims, my Lord Oberon, on our way to Nottingham Fair to-morrow.

Robin

Keep that knave quiet!

[*Little John places his hand over the Tinker's mouth.*]

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Madam, I marvel that you have heard naught of Robin Hood and his merry men that thus you venture the forest ways by night?

Abbess

Who Robin Hood may be, or if it be you, troubles me but little. We are pilgrims on our way to St. Hilda's shrine. We would pause to-morrow at Nottingham Fair. Our way was long and we were ill advised. Thus it is that night found us still within the forest.

Robin

Madam, that shall not be cause for sorrow. My men will convey you safely on your way, with these your companions, but that young man there must stay behind.

[Points out the hitherto silent Florio. Archers guard the rest of the party.]

Abbess

This delay and insult to my person will cost you dear.

Robin

If the pain be no greater than the pleasure of your company belike we shall not complain.

[Bows.]

Madam, your servant to command.

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

[She turns on her heel and goes out, escorted by some of the archers and accompanied by her attendants.]

Tinker

My friend the Tanner here, not to speak of myself, is bound for Nottingham.

Robin

You shall be bound to yonder tree instead. Seize them!

[Men seize the Tinker and the Tanner.]

Marian

Robin, let them be! What harm can these rude louts—poor souls—do us?

Robin

I grant your boon, sweet Marian. Let them go with the others, George à Greene!

[They are released and go off bowing most profuse thanks.]

Robin

[To the archers guarding Florio.]

Bring forth that young spark that we may see the light of his countenance.

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Florio

[*With unruffled politeness.*]

My name is Florio, so please you. I am on a pilgrimage because of a vow I made my lady. Would I had remained at court.

Robin

At court—pray, do you serve Prince John?

Florio

Although I am accounted one of his ornaments, yet the bird which fluttereth by twilight, seeming a swan, is proved but a bat when viewed against the sun, so I in the presence of my prince am less than men think me.

Little John

[*With sarcastic admiration.*]

Marry, well said. I had thought thee tonguetied till I heard thee speak.

Florio

Bold fellow, a rough discourse needs a smooth excuse as jewelers hide a crack in a precious stone by setting it deep in gold.

Little John

[*To those about him.*]

Hand me my cudgel. I will break a quibble on this courtier's skull.

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

[He raises a staff while Florio shrinks back horrified at Little John's bad manners.]

Robin

Obey the law of the greenwood, Little John. A fair fight and equal weapons.

Little John

[Lowers his staff.]

Have you any gold, my gallant?

Florio

Only this pouncet-box. I pray you smell.

[Sticks it under Little John's nose, who coughs and sneezes. All laugh as Little John makes a face.]

Robin

By Saint George—a worthy recruit to our band!

[Comes to him.]

Will you accept an outlaw's fellowship?

Florio

Aye. A gentleman never lacks for company.

Robin

Then you must fight with me—or if it like you better, with Little John. It is a trial all my men must undergo.

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Florio

How mean you this fight?

Robin

With good broadsword or quarterstaff. Take your choice—the worse man cries quits.

Florio

A gentleman fights with his brains.

Little John

I could dash your brains out with a mullein stalk.
I'll waste no good timber on a blood pudding.

Robin

[*Draws his sword.*]

Come—to it!

Florio

Put up! Would you have me like a torch which giving light to others consumes itself? I know not this broadsword.

Little John

To be plain, will you fight?

Florio

It threatens despair to me that I am less courteous than you look for. I pray you remember—some flowers softly touched yield a sweet scent, but chafed too roughly give a rank savor. My skill is not in your kind of fence.

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Little John

[Mimicking him.]

Choose you any weapon then. I'll not let a trifle such as the nicety of your judgment stay me from cracking your skull.

[The others all laugh.]

Florio

The last laugh is the better grin. I will essay you with my rapier. Choose you what you will.

Little John

A bargain! My quarterstaff against your lark's spit. An I don't cudgel your fine picked phrases into good plain English, count me no man.

[Florio with much ceremony draws a small springy rapier. The others come nearer. Florio salutes Little John, who rolls up his sleeves, spits on his hands and gets a firm grasp on his quarterstaff.]

Robin

Have a care, Little John. The man whose wit is too quick for you is no mean foe.

[Florio strikes a fencer's attitude. Little John rushes at him. They fight, but to Little John's bewilderment he can do no damage.]

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Little John

[As they pause.]

The sword is bewitched!

Florio

A staff is an ill weapon to wield against a gentleman. Have you naught else, bold fellow?

Little John

[In a fury.]

Give me my broadsword,—I'll clip this cockcomb's ears!

[They hand him a broadsword and the fight is resumed. After a stiff bout Florio sends Little John's sword flying out of his hands.]

Florio

Yield you, bold fellow!

[Following up his advantage.]

Robin

The young spark is too quick for the old blade,—eh, Little John? Yield to our Florio,—or I swear he will run you through.

Little John

[Strides up to Florio.]

I yield,—you have beaten me in fair fight.

[Whacks Florio a tremendous thump on the back that makes the latter start and cough.]

What will you have me do?

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Florio

[*Still coughing from the effects of the blow.*]

Eh—be not another time too rash—

[*Puts up his rapier deliberately.*]

be not, I say, too rash in encountering an unknown foe lest when you think to have the victory already in your grasp it will prove to be like those apples from Inde, most fair in outward show but only dust and ashes within.

Robin

Look you follow the precept, Little John. Florio, welcome to Sherwood. Will you sup with us, Florio?

Florio

The gods supped once with a poor man. I can do no less.

Little John

We shall christen you first—Alan à Dale, awake Friar Tuck. His blessing on this recruit!

[*Friar Tuck is aroused with difficulty and comes forward.*]

Friar Tuck

[*Thickly.*]

What shall I christen him? Every man has a name, look you.

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Florio

[With a flourish which Little John interrupts.]

My name——

Little John

Signifies nothing. I will bestow a new one on you. From your garb let you be known as Will Scarlet.

Friar Tuck

[Pours a libation over Florio's head.]

By the spirit of this good wine let you henceforth be known as Will Scarlet.

Robin

The oath—let him take the outlaw's oath!

[A bow and arrow is brought and the arrow is handed to Florio.]

Little John

Swear upon the arrow to serve King Richard and to obey without question your leader, Robin Hood!

Florio

The pelican is a bird of such exceeding piety that she gives freely of her own blood to nourish her young. Shall not I—whom you choose to call Will Scarlet—take example from nature and sacrifice my life to my uncle?

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Little John

Now in the name of all the outlaws from Adam,
what is it you say?

Florio

Only this. I am Florio Gamwell—nephew to
Robin Hood.

Robin

Why did you not tell us this before?

Florio

[*Points at Little John.*]

This bold fellow was too pressing.

Little John

By my faith, I like thee!

[*Shakes his hand.*]

Nay, if you got the better of me with your lark's
spit, yet it was Robin Hood's blood in you that
did it! You shall tell your tale anon. What
say you, Robin Hood, to mirth and song before
more serious matters threaten?

Robin

With a good will—if Maid Marian will grant us
leave?

Marian

Heartily, Robin.

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Robin

Shall I sing you a song in praise of forest joys?

All

[*Shout.*]

Aye,—the song! The song!

[*Robin Hood stands center and sings. All the foresters and his immediate followers join in the chorus.*]

Friar Tuck

[*Awakens with a start as the chorus ends.*]

Marry, well sung. The night air has not cracked your voice.

Robin

I thank you.

Florio

Thou hast a sweetly pretty pipe, uncle.

[*Robin acknowledges this last remark ironically.*]

Marian

Robin, let us not forget the morrow.

Robin

Well said, Marian. Nephew, are you willing to prove you serve King Richard?

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Florio

Uncle, the proof shall be in my doing. How mean you "serve King Richard"?

Robin

His cousin Kenneth helped us to our escape to-day, but he, alas, was taken. To-morrow at Nottingham Fair there may be hope of rescue. We dare not trust the temper of Prince John if we leave this boy to his mercy.

Marian

My brother must be saved, Robin.

Florio

I am of the same mind with this lady. Yet the means are not so certain. How shall this be done?

Robin

A picked band of my men will go disguised to the Fair. The Sheriff of Nottingham offers a golden arrow for the archer's prize. I mean to win this arrow and Kenneth's freedom.

Florio

It is a bold plan, uncle.

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Robin

And therefore must succeed. By twos and threes we go, and at a signal we shall seize our weapons, surprise the castle and carry off this boy.

Marian

Is there no way less full of danger?

Robin

I can think of no other,—but danger is not to be feared.

[A sudden cry off stage of "Hold!" The rattle of arms and then silence.]

Robin

[Springs to his feet.]

To your posts, men! Who's there?

[Little John and some archers run off toward the right.]

Marian

Robin! What enemy is this?

Robin

Perchance some spy. Be not uneasy.

[Little John returns.]

Little John

Your men watching the forest ways have taken a knight prisoner.

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Robin

Do you know him?

Little John

Nay, he hath but scanty gear and bears no arms
upon his shield.

[Robin comes down.]

Robin

I will question this knight myself.

[To Marian.]

Grant me leave, my love?

Marian

If you stay not too long away!

*[Robin goes. The Fool has managed to get
his gage out of his mouth and moans.]*

Marian

[Starts.]

What was that?

Little John

[Draws his sword. He perceives the Fool.]

Alack, I had forgot our prisoner! Turn your
head away, Maid Marian. This is no time to
be troubled with a Fool.

*[Starts as if to run the Fool through. Marian
screams and stays him.]*

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Marian

You must not kill him! Poor soul, what harm
can he do us?

Fool

You say well, Lady Marian. Help me free from
my bonds and I'll repay you with something
you should know.

Marian

Little John, free the Fool.

Fool

[As Little John comes toward him.]

Take you the knife, Lady. I fear the grey friar's
hand might slip.

*[Marian takes the knife from Little John and
frees the Fool, who gets deliberately to his
feet and stretches.]*

Fool

Marry, the hospitality of the greenwood is not
easily suffered—aye, but I've a crick in my
back from lying on that damp moss!

Little John

Cease your prating, Fool!

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Fool

Well bethought! I've heard much as I lay there,
but until I got my gag loose I could not speak.
The Fair at Nottingham is a trick of the Sher-
iff's to catch Robin Hood.

Marian

[*Alarmed.*]

Tell us quickly what you mean!

Fool

The golden arrow is his stratagem. It is a bait
the outlaw will nibble at, quoth the Sheriff.

Little John

If you lie to us it will go hard with you!

Fool

Why should I lie? A fool is ever on the side
of the right. This golden arrow for which
Robin Hood has a mind to shoot will betray
him to his death.

Little John

Hold your peace, Fool! Here comes Robin and
the stranger knight. If you breathe a hint of
Robin's plans before the newcomer, I'll slip
this between your ribs.

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

[Jabs the Fool with the hilt of his dagger as Robin ushers in King Richard disguised as a poor knight.]

Robin

[Continuing a conversation begun off stage.]
Sir Knight, it may be as you say, and yet it is a strange hour to be abroad in Sherwood.

King Richard

There are some who can not choose as they will, but must follow their need.

Robin

True. Will you sup with me, Sir?

King Richard

Willingly. Who is it that offers this forest hospitality?

Robin

Men call me Robin Hood. All who accept my fare must pay the reckoning.

King Richard

I take your meaning. Here is my purse. You may search it freely.

[Little John takes the purse from him and empties it.]

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Little John

Here is but ten shillings, Robin.

Robin

Search him. He has more gold hid upon his person.

[King Richard draws himself up and steps back.]

King Richard

By your leave, Robin Hood! On my knight-hood I have no more gold.

[Little John pauses and looks enquiringly at Robin Hood.]

Robin Hood

[The two men look one another in the eye.]

I do believe you. Let be, Little John. He shall pay his score another way. Sit you here.

[Indicates a seat under the oak.]

This, Sir Knight, is Maid Marian whom the usurper now reigning in England has driven to the shelter of the greenwood.

[King Richard makes a courtly bow to Marian.]

Marian

Welcome to Sherwood.

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

King Richard

I thank you.

[He sits by Robin.]

Robin

[Passing him food and drink.]

Tell me more of your tale.

King Richard

It is too long for one telling. To pay a debt I owed I had to leave my lands in pawn to another. This man whom I trusted with my estate has betrayed my faith. My lands have been taken from me and now I wander an outcast.

Robin

Who has done you this wrong?

King Richard

Prince John, whom you called usurper.

Robin

Do not despair. When King Richard comes back many wrongs will be righted.

King Richard

Men say King Richard is a prisoner in foreign lands.

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Robin

Say they so indeed? I know of one who fain
would have that true, and yet I doubt not
King Richard will come at need.

King Richard

Do you serve this Richard then?

Robin

Aye, by my faith, I do! Not Richard but the
usurper made me an outlaw. Bide you here
in the forest with us until our king returns.

King Richard

Nay, that may not be. To-morrow I must to
Nottingham or else my lands will be forfeit
for my debt.

Robin

Can you pay the sum you owe?

King Richard

The world has made me a beggar.

Robin

Who knows? Every morrow sees the world
begin anew. Have you no friends?

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

King Richard

Who would be a friend to the weak if it made
the strong his enemy?

Robin

You deem the world but an ill place, it seems.
What sum is it you lack to make up this debt?

King Richard

Four hundred pounds.

Robin

Little John, fetch me the treasure bag.
[*Little John goes out.*]

Robin

If I lend you this sum, what service will you
give me in return?

King Richard

[*Takes off a ring.*]

This ring is all I have. I will leave it as a pledge
which I shall redeem when King Richard
comes back from the wars.

[*Robin takes the ring and examines it.*]

Robin

King Richard's leopard!

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

King Richard

Aye. The story goes that once it was his.

Robin

Then I will wear it for his sake.

[Enter Little John with a heavy bag which he empties upon the table. A glittering heap of coins pours out.]

Robin

This knight has pledged his service to our band, Little John. Make up a sum of four hundred pounds.

[Little John fills a smaller bag which he hands to Robin.]

Robin

You need not fear to take this money. It is usurer's coin which I hold for King Richard's service.

King Richard

[Takes the bag.]

I have no thanks worth your bounty. But if ever you, Robin Hood, are in dire straits, if your foes beset you sore, sound but three blasts upon your horn and I shall be by your side to share your danger.

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Robin

[*Laughs.*]

Marry, if need be I will claim your services.
But enough of this! Dawn will soon break.
Alan à Dale, you shall sing us a love song ere
we go to rest.

Several

[*Shout.*]

Come, Alan à Dale, a song!

Alan à Dale

[*Comes forward.*]

I will sing you an old song whose words ring
sweet in the ear.

So Sweet is She!

[Song by Ben Jonson]

“ Have you seen the white lily grow
Before rude hands have touch'd it?
Have you mark'd the fall of snow
Before the earth hath smutch'd it?
Have you felt the wool of beaver,
Or the swan's down either!
Or have you smelt the bud of briar,
Or the nard in the fire?
Or have you tasted the bag of the bee?
Oh so white, oh so soft, oh so sweet, so sweet,
So sweet is she!

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Have you seen the fair crystal rock
When a gentle dew hath lash'd it?
Or Aurora's golden lock
When a morning may hath wash'd it?
Or did you ever softly steal
To hear poor Philomel?
Or have you known the stolen blisses
Of the sweet nun's holy kisses?
Or have seen the blossoms of the tree?
Oh so clear, oh so bright, oh so fair, so sweet,
Oh so sweet is she!

[During the song the stage grows gradually darker and while Marian and Robin listen, much wrapped up in themselves, Richard contrives to slip out, unseen by anyone.]

Marian

[Sighs as the song ends.]

If only Kenneth were here to share our joy. I
thank you, Alan à Dale.

Robin

My merry men, let us seek some sleep. At sunrise
we must to Nottingham. Sir Knight, we
have an enterprise——

[Pauses as he glances around and discovers that King Richard has vanished.]

Sir Knight!

[Silence.]

Little John, where did the knight go?

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Little John

I know not, Robin. He was here beside me not many minutes ago.

[*All search hastily.*]

Robin

A traitor has been here! After him, my men!

[*Little John is going.*]

Stay you here, Little John, to guard Maid Marian. George à Greene, bring me this knight dead or alive!

[*George à Greene and several archers rush out.*]

Robin

I must to Nottingham Fair. You, Will Scarlet, shall go along with me. Alan à Dale, pick me trusty men and see them furnished with disguises. Hold the others ready at the forest edge. Marian, be not uneasy. We will save your brother in spite of traitors and Prince John.

[*George à Greene runs in again.*]

George à Greene

We can find no trace of this knight, Robin.

Robin

Scatter widely through the forest! He must be seized!

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Little John

He heard nothing of our plans.

Robin

No matter! He knows now the way to our secret bower.

[Takes Marian in his arms.]

Farewell, sweetheart! I go to bring your brother to you.

Marian

I hold him in my heart next to you, dear Robin.
You must save him.

Robin

After this knight, my merry men! And then—
to Nottingham!

[They embrace and the others all go out, leaving Marian and Little John behind.]

CURTAIN

ACT III

Before the walls of Nottingham. The next morning. The Fair is in progress. Toward the left the way is clear to Sherwood and the open country. Up stage, under the city walls, are a number of booths which are arranged roughly in a semi-circle shutting in the right hand side of an open square, but with spaces between for passage ways. The booths display various trinkets for sale and some proclaim from placards hung up in front that prodigies may be seen within. A May-pole stands up stage center before the row of booths, and garlands of flowers hang from it. The curtain rises to the music of a country dance and the stage is filled with merry-makers. As the dance ends amid laughter and a confusion of sounds, the crowd press eagerly toward the different booths, while the sellers cry their wares. Alan à Dale disguised as a ballad-monger comes from the crowd and crosses the stage, crying: "Any ballads? Any ballads? Ballads—two a penny." The Shepherd and his Boy pass by and Alan à Dale stops them.

Alan à Dale

Ballads? Two a penny.

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Boy

Have you *The Cooper of Norfolk?* Or *The
Cunning Northern Beggar?*

Alan à Dale

[*Searches his packet.*]

Nay, but here is *York, York for my money;*
know you this?

[*Sings.*]

As I came through the North country,
The fashions of the world to see—

Shepherd

Lad, we cannot spare a groat for such idleness.
I thank ye, master ballad-monger, but we be
poor men.

[*Tugs at the Boy's sleeve.*]

Alan à Dale

Stay, goodman! Have you heard the ballad of
Anne Askew, who died upon the rack, written
by herself in Newgate?

[*Shakes the ballad under the Shepherd's nose.*]

Boy

I would have that one! I love to read of tor-
tures!

Shepherd

Come along, lad. There's a five-legged calf thou

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

canst see for nothing. I give you good-day,
master ballad-monger.

[*Shepherd drags Boy away.*]

Alan à Dale

[*Looking after them. Sings.*]

The cuckoo comes in April,
And stays the month of May;
Sings a song at Midsummer,
And then he goes away.

[*George à Greene, with a peddler's pack upon
his shoulders, comes to Alan à Dale.*]

George à Greene

Well met, Alan à Dale! Thy ballad singing
would cozen a lord. Hast any news of that
traitor knight?

Alan à Dale

[*Making certain they are not overheard.*]

I have searched through all the throng, even as
last night we searched the forest ways, but
no trace of him can I find.

George à Greene

Nor I. But watch we here. The Sheriff and
Prince John will pass this way to see the
sports. Then we shall note whether this
traitor knight attends them.

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Alan à Dale

Have you seen Robin?

George à Greene

He lies concealed in the greenwood until the hour of noon is near. Then he will come forth to shoot for the Sheriff's golden arrow.

[Enter Maid Marian dressed as a country girl, followed by Little John, who is disguised as a countryman. He carries his quarter-staff. Maid Marian has cherries for sale.]

Marian

[Not recognizing the others.]

Cherry ripe—ripe—ripe—I cry
Full and fair ones; come, and buy.

[Little John comes close to George à Greene.]

Little John

By an outlaw's faith, thou art George à Greene!

George à Greene

Little John!—and Maid Marian!

Alan à Dale

You have broken your faith with Robin Hood!
He bade you guard Maid Marian in the forest.

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Little John

[*Ruefully.*]

Would he had given the task to you! She would have it none other than that I must obey her! Her commands were to Nottingham—and here we are. If Robin Hood slay me for this—

Marian

I'll answer for you to Robin. Little John, tell them what we learned from the Fool. Robin must be warned.

Little John

Aye, Alan à Dale and George à Greene, one of you must to Robin and warn him against shooting for the prize. The golden arrow is the Sheriff's stratagem to draw Robin from Sherwood.

George à Greene

He will lie hid till noon in the forest. Clym and William of Cloudesdale are with him but no man else knows where he is. We must wait upon the outskirts of the Fair to warn him.

Little John

Nay, our men must not be too much scattered. There is Kenneth to be rescued, which means a stiff fight now the Sheriff is prepared for our coming.

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Marian

What shall we do? If I save Robin, I lose my brother!

George à Greene

Robin Hood has got us out of a tight corner ere this, Maid Marian. Be of good cheer! Wherever a man dwell, he shall be sure to have a thorn bush near his door.

Alan à Dale

Aye, and he that's afraid of leaves must not come in a wood. Have no fear. Robin is no easy bone for the Sheriff to gnaw. Where he least thinks there goes the hare away.

Little John

Marry, but do not forget that our good right arms and no proverbs will win us home this day!

[Drums and trumpets are heard and the crowd shout and fill up the center of the stage.]

George à Greene

Here come the Sheriff and Prince John to see the sports. We will note if that traitor knight be with them.

[Marian draws Little John down stage as the crowd parts to let Prince John, the Sheriff

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

and Sir Hugh pass. They come down stage and take their places on seats prepared for them.]

Alan à Dale

The knight is not among them! Where can he have gone?

George à Greene

I like it not. We must get a word with Robin when he comes.

Alan à Dale

[Goes across the stage singing.]

Ye maidens and men, come for what you lack,
And buy the fair ballads I have in my pack.

Sheriff

[To Prince John.]

You shall see my stratagem, my lord. It will be working soon!

[Chuckles.]

My spies tell me the Fair is filled with Robin Hood's men disguised! There's a reckoning to be paid them this day.

Prince John

As long as you do not let Robin Hood slip through your fingers again, I care not what you do with his men. Where is he? Has he come yet?

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Sheriff

Nay, but in good time, in good time. My golden arrow will bring him forth. Think you on the tortures for him, my lord. Something fitting a forest outlaw! I'll have him delivered bound into your hands.

Prince John

Sir Hugh, read the proclamation of Kenneth's treason.

Sir Hugh

[*Rises. A Herald proclaims silence.*]

Hear the judgment of your Prince, the most puissant John. Know ye that this said Kenneth stands attainted of high treason in that he did most traitorously and foully conspire against his liege lord and prince by giving aid to the outlaw Robin Hood. Therefore we, as ruler of this realm in the absence of the most noble King Richard, do proclaim him guilty and sentence him to be hanged by the neck until he is dead. Let the sentence be carried out this day at noon! Given under our royal seal.

[*A murmur from the crowd and a sharp cry from Marian. Little John and disguised foresters gather around her so she cannot be seen.*]

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Sheriff

What noise was that? Are they all traitors?

Sir Hugh

[To the crowd.]

Silence!

Sheriff

Have I not let them have a Fair and a hanging to boot! What more do they want? They've bread and cheese and their pint of ale and a half-mad wag to scrape a fiddle for them. What else, pray? Is not a hanging better sport than a bear-baiting?

Sir Hugh

You indulge them too much.

Prince John

Nay. The more they think of pleasure, the less time they will have to think of Richard.

[Prince John, Sir Hugh and the Sheriff talk apart as the throng comes and goes through the Fair. The Fool comes in accompanied by a man with a drum. He sets up a rude platform for a puppet show, as he calls to the crowd. The Fool has changed his motley for the disguise of a strolling player.]

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Fool

Come and see the merry play of *Patient Grizill* done by new puppets!—a most conceited comedy! Full of instruction for the young, with a jig at the end!

[*The Boy drags the Shepherd over to the Fool and stands gaping before him.*]

Boy

Master, here's something must be seen!

Fool

You say truly. You have a pretty wit, young man. Can you answer me a riddle? How deep is the sea?

Boy

[*Perplexed.*]

How deep is the sea?

[*Turns to the Shepherd.*]

Know you the answer, master?

Shepherd

No man can know that. It is as deep as God wills.

Fool

Aye, true enough. And yet know you not the sea is only the depth of a stone's throw?

[*The crowd around them increases. The Fool exhibits some of the puppets.*]

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Boy

A riddle, quotha! Look you, master player,
here's one for you.

Fool

Say on boldly, my lad.

Boy

How many calves' tails would reach to the moon?

Fool

[*Patronizingly.*]

'Faith, I cannot tell.

Boy

One, if it be long enough.

[*The crowd laugh and jeer at the Fool.
Florio comes strolling through the press
about the puppet stage. He has not sought
to disguise his elegance.*]

Florio

[*To the Fool.*]

Prithee, good fellow, take this penny.

[*Offers a coin.*]

Fool

My thanks, noble sir.

[*Florio turns away and Prince John perceives
him.*]

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Prince John

[*To Sir Hugh.*]

Is not yonder Florio?

Sir Hugh

Aye, my lord.

Prince John

Call him hither.

[*Sir Hugh comes to Florio, who receives him with a bow.*]

Sir Hugh

Prince John bids you attend him.

Florio

I fly, Sir Hugh, I fly.

[*He saunters leisurely to Prince John and bows before him.*]

Your humblest servant, my Prince.

Prince John

How came you here? They brought me a tale that you were taken by Robin Hood and held a prisoner in the forest.

Florio

They said truly. My travels, like those of Ulysses, have led me among strange adventures, for time wisheth rather to be spent in

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

vain toys than in idle thoughts. Vouchsafe to bestow your clemency upon me.

Sheriff

Have you any news of Robin Hood?

Florio

I stole away from him while he was heavy with wine, to tender the poor offering of my life to my lord; a gift which duty binds the subject to present, and courtesy the Prince to accept. I pray you give me news of the poor knight who escaped even as I did.

Prince John

A poor knight? I know not whom you mean.

Florio

Truly, he served you well but learned little of the outlaw.

Prince John

I know of no poor knight in my service.

Florio

Your pardon if I have been mistaken in speaking of matters which you wish not to disclose.

[A shout from the crowd as the tumblers come forward. The Fool advances. The drummer makes a great din.]

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Fool

Gentles all!

[*Bows toward the Prince.*]

Behold our feats of agility! You shall see such goings, turnings, tumbings, castings, hops, jumps, leaps, skips, springs, gambols, somersaults, caperings forward, backward, sidewise, downward, upward, with such sundry windings, gyrations, all done so lightly, with such easiness, as I tell you plain is not possible by me in few words to express!

[*The tumblers perform while the crowd forms a ring about them.*]

Fool

[*Passes his hat.*]

Spare a penny for the tumblers, gentles! A penny!

Alan à Dale

Any tales or ballads? I have *Bevis of Hampton*, *The Squire of Low Degree*, *Sir Eglamour*, *Sir Gawain*, *The Sack Full of News*, *The Nut Broken Maid*, *The King and the Tanner*, and many more than I rehearse here.

Tinker

[*Comes from the crowd leading the Tanner.*]

Well said, master ballad-monger. I have a mind to buy your *King and the Tanner* for my

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

friend here. I am Wat the Tinker of Banbury; this is Dick the Tanner of Purley Common.

[*Fumbles for a coin.*]

We could tell you a tale of the fairy folk and how they carried us away into the greenwood, eh, Dick? a tale of greater marvels than any your sack holds, and all true.

[*Alan à Dale sells him the ballad. The Cook is passing by when he sees the Fool. He pauses.*]

Cook

Where hast been, Fool? Whence come you?

Fool

From Barnesdale to mind my business at Nottingham.

Cook

[*Puzzled, staring at him.*]

Thy business—hath a Fool business?

Fool

Aye, more than another. But why call you me fool? Who art thou?

Cook

Marry, thou knowest me as well as thou knowest the Parish church. Art thou not the Sheriff's Fool?

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Fool

Goda'mercy—lacks he a fool?—and thou servest him so well! My quality is that of a strolling player—too much nappy ale makes the eye see more than the reason can account for. Yonder's the shade—go sleep it off awhile.

[The Fool turns on his heel and walks away, leaving the bewildered Cook standing alone.]

Cook

Aye—I be drunk indeed!

[Examines the sleeve of his jacket.]

This is my jerkin right enough—I know that stain here upon the elbow—but if another man be wearing it—how then? Is he a thief—or am I? If it be my jerkin—and yet I be not I—who is the thief? Solve me this riddle and the thing it clear. If I know the thief, I know I—if I cannot find the thief—then I am undone——

[Goes off arguing the matter on his fingers. Florio takes his leave of the Prince and first mingles with the crowd and then draws Maid Marian, Little John and George à Greene down stage.]

Florio

[As though meeting Marian by chance.]

Fair Maiden, give me some of these cherries which I perceive must grow upon thy lips.

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

[In a lower tone, to the others.]

I have charged the Prince with this matter of the poor knight, but he affects ignorance. I cannot conceive in what way this knight has proved traitor to my uncle.

Marian

[Gives him a bunch of cherries.]

Can you not think of a plan to stay the Prince and serve both Robin and Kenneth?

Florio

Lady, soon-to-be my aunt, thy eagerly expectant nephew shall find it in his duty to lay at thy fern-seed feet the small sacrifice of his life. This offering like ointment made from the fat of the fish Mugra will cause you to pass through most furious flames without any peril.

Little John

Look you, Will Scarlet, the matter is too pressing for the adornment of your courtier speech. When Robin comes, George à Greene and his men will stand ready to obey his commands. Your part will be to get this boy Kenneth from the Sheriff's clutches. Prince John does not suspect you, therefore no one will stay you from going near. Watch Robin Hood for the signal.

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Florio

I will so act as to win my uncle's favor, and, I hope, some token of my aunt's gratitude, if my wish does not presume too far.

Marian

Gentle Scarlet!

[She gives him her hand. General shout and movement among the crowd. The Fool comes forward.]

Fool

A wrestling match! The champion of England—he who threw the seven champions of Christendom one upon another—challenges all to try their skill. Who comes to meet this man?

[The wrestler stands beside the Fool and displays his muscles. A moment's pause and then Friar Tuck, who has been sampling the good Nottingham ale, lurches forward. He wears a strange disguise of sheepskins and a cap upon his tonsured head.]

Friar Tuck

Bring on this champion!

[He stumbles and nearly falls, but the Fool catches him and puts him on his feet again.]

Nay, do not push me! I'll wrestle this man in fair fight until his ribs burst asunder!

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

[Lunges heavily at the wrestler, who avoids him.]

Have at you for a scurvy knave!

Fool

Goodman, stay awhile. You must not forego all custom so. Shake hands—then to it!

Friar Tuck

I'll shake him till his teeth rattle in his skull! Wrestler, quotha! I'll wrestle him an he were own brother to Gog and Magog. Where is he?

Fool

Here—standing beside you.

[Little John steps forward and seizes Friar Tuck about the waist, as the latter is upon the point of making a fierce onslaught on the wrestler.]

Little John

Have you left your wit at the ale-stake?

[Drags Friar Tuck away.]

You will betray us all with your drunken brawling.

Friar Tuck

There's not a soberer man in the parish. He a wrestler? I could twist his neck with my little finger and not know I had done it.

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

[*Little John sets him down violently on a box before a booth and Friar Tuck, still protesting, falls asleep.*]

Little John

[*To Marian.*]

It lacks but little of noon. Be not distressed if your brother is brought forth bound. We shall soon find means to loose him.

[*The Herald sounds his trumpet. He cries, "Hear ye! Hear ye!"*]

Herald

Archers and all who have skill with the bow, listen! The Lord High Sheriff of Nottingham offers a golden arrow for the best archer at the Fair.

[*Holds up the golden arrow.*]

Who will try their skill?

[*Several come forward. Men cross the stage carrying targets which are set up off stage. The crowd is massed before Prince John and his court.*]

Sheriff

[*To Prince John.*]

Now we shall see the working of my stratagem.

[*Chuckles.*]

[*The first three archers take their position and shoot. Robin Hood, Clym o' the Clough and*

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

William of Cloudesdale enter. Marian gives a little cry when she sees him.]

Robin

[Starts when he sees her.]

You here, Marian! Little John, I take this ill that my commands are so little heeded!

Marian

Nay, dear Robin, knowing your danger, did you think to keep me away? We must fly! This prize is a trap laid by the Sheriff to catch you. Little John and I have come to warn you before it is too late.

Robin

And Kenneth? What of him?

Marian

Let Little John and Will Scarlet rescue him. We will abide their coming at the forest edge.

Robin

Sweetheart, it may not be—nor will the Sheriff find it an easy matter to seize me. I will not leave Kenneth in their hands. But it grieves me for your peril. Your coming has made our task the harder.

[During the above others are shooting for the prize by threes.]

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Herald

Are there no more who will venture for the prize? Who will try their skill?

Robin

[Strides forward followed by Clym o' the Clough and William of Cloudesdale.]

I will!

Clym o' the Clough

And I!

William of Cloudesdale

And I!

Herald

Your name, stranger?

Robin

Robert of Barnesdale, a yeoman.

[Robin, accompanied by the two archers, takes his position. Three times he strings the arrow and shoots. A cheer greets the success of each shot, growing louder with each attempt. Prince John, the Sheriff, Sir Hugh and the Abbess of Kirklee come down attracted by the clamor. They stand in a group with a cluster of men-at-arms behind them.]

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Herald

The last test is to split a hazel twig. No one has done this to-day. Will you try, Robert of Barnesdale?

[Sir Hugh starts and talks with those about him upon hearing the name. A man carries off a hazel twig to be set up as a mark.]

Robin

Aye, with a good will.

[Deliberately he prepares to shoot. The crowd watch eagerly. He looses the arrow and a cheer goes up.]

All

The hazel twig is cleft in twain!

Herald

Robert of Barnesdale, you have won the prize.
The Sheriff's golden arrow is yours.

Robin

I thank you, goodman.

[He stretches out his hand to take the arrow.]

Abbess of Kirklee

[To the Sheriff.]

That is the forest thief that insulted my pilgrim band. Seize the outlaw!

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Sir Hugh

[*Striding forward.*]

Stop! There's but one man in all England can shoot an arrow like that! This is Robin Hood! Seize him!

All

Robin Hood!

[*Instantly all is confusion. Robin's men come forward but are no match for the numerous men in mail. Robin is beaten down and seized, as are his men, one by one. Little John makes a valiant defense of Maid Marian, but he, too, is overpowered. All are prisoners, even Friar Tuck, who is rudely awakened by the clamor.*]

Sheriff

[*To Robin.*]

Eh, you've trifled once too often with my cunning! The golden arrow was my stratagem. Tut—tut—the Lady Marian—eh, we've got all the band!

Prince

[*Sees Florio a prisoner.*]

Release that gentleman.

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Florio

I pray you, sir man-at-arms, for this time disobey your Prince. Did not the Romans say he that wandered did nothing else but heap up sorrows for his friends, and shame for himself? I am a wanderer that now serves King Richard and Robin Hood.

Prince

Enough. Here is another traitor. As for the outlaw, Robin Hood, he shall be drawn and quartered and buried at a crossroads. Sir Hugh, I deliver the Lady Marian into your hands to do with her what you like.

Marian

Mercy, my lord—banish him out of England—what despite other than the loss of a few deer has Robin done you? Why take his life—is that the mercy of a prince? Spare Robin Hood and the people will hail you as one greater than Richard.

Prince

Sir Hugh, take the girl away!

[Sir Hugh roughly seizes Marian, who screams. Robin breaks from those who hold him and dashes at Sir Hugh, whom he hurls to the ground. He is overpowered again and

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

*Sir Hugh has Marian, in tears, conducted
to one side.]*

Sheriff

Marry, we must rid ourselves of such pestilent fellows. How now, Fool, what, art thou, taken with the rest?

Fool

Aye, I've come to a fool's end.

Sheriff

Bring forth the prisoner Kenneth. They shall all hang from the same gallows.

Little John

Is this the justice of England? Are we not to have a fair trial?

Sheriff

Trial, bah! A pack of outlaws need no trial. We shall not hang too many of you, I warrant.

Robin

My lord—Prince John—I do not plead for my life—that I grant is forfeit. All I ask is that the Lady Marian be left free to choose her own way. She is innocent of all that you may hold against me.

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Prince

Have no fear for the Lady Marian. Sir Hugh shall marry her. Silence, I say!

[*Kenneth is brought in guarded, with his hands tied behind him. Marian utters a cry as she sees him.*]

Sheriff

There will be a good day's work done in Nottingham to-day.

[*Chuckles.*]

Prince

Sir Hugh, it were better the Lady Marian did not see this hanging.

Sir Hugh

[*Savagely.*]

Let her stay! She'll not believe this Robin Hood dead unless she sees it with her own eyes.

Sheriff

Convey your prisoners.

Robin

Hold! There's one boon which I ask.

Sheriff

An outlaw can claim no privileges!

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ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Prince John

Stay! Name it, Robin Hood. If it be within reason, justice will grant it, but hope for nothing less than death.

Robin

Let me sound but three blasts upon my horn ere I die.

Sheriff

Nay, and bring thy forest band about our ears.

Robin

Alas, you see them here all prisoners.

Prince John

We grant the boon. It is a little thing.

[The Sheriff protests. Robin stands center as the men-at-arms release his arms and raises his horn to his lips. He sounds three blasts upon it, slowly and deliberately. A pause.]

Sheriff

Enough of this mummery!

[An answering trumpet call is heard, which comes rapidly nearer. There is much confusion.]

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Sheriff

I told you but you heeded me not. There will be no rescue this time. Look to your weapons!
[*The trumpet is heard near at hand. Enter a man-at-arms.*]

Man-at-Arms

[*Kneels.*]

King Richard is coming, my lord!

All

King Richard!

[*Confusion and murmuring, as King Richard and his knights enter in state.*]

King Richard

How now, Prince John? Sits there a smiling welcome on your face?

Prince John

I—I—eh, 'faith, my lord—men reported you a prisoner—I did not look for so speedy a return to England.

King Richard

Indeed, I do believe you. Sheriff of Nottingham, who are these prisoners, and this maiden who weeps?

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Sheriff

May it please your highness, they are a band of thieves whose hanging your arrival has interrupted. Not to trouble you further in the matter, we will proceed.

King Richard

[Points at Robin Hood.]

I seem to know that man's face. Come hither.
[Robin comes up to him and kneels.]

King Richard

Nay, rise and look at me, Robin Hood. It that not a leopard ring you wear upon your finger?
[All are surprised at Richard's knowledge of his name. Robin rises, stares at Richard and drops on his knees again.]

King Richard

Is it even so? You know the poor knight who supped with you in the forest last night and then slipped away to your dismay?

Robin

Your pardon, King Richard, that I knew you not.

King Richard

You knew me not—but in the forest I learned to know you. Rise, Robert, Earl of Huntingdon, whom men have called Robin Hood!
[A cheer as Robin rises.]

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

Sheriff

Tut—tut—tut—your majesty—you do not understand—

King Richard

I understand my office better, I believe, than report has it that you do yours.

[*Sheriff subsides.*]

King Richard

If you will crave any boon, now you are Earl of Huntingdon, name it.

Robin

First, that you will free your cousin Kenneth and my men whom this Sheriff would have hanged.

King Richard

Granted, on condition that they serve me. I have need of stout English archers about my throne.

Robin

Furthermore, I ask that you grant me the hand of this lady as my wife.

[*Takes Marian by the hand and leads her forward.*]

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

King Richard

With all my heart I grant it, if you will lead my troops, Robin—I use the name still—your pardon, Earl of Huntingdon.

Marian

What words can I find for thanks, my lord?

King Richard

None. Your happiness shall be my thanks.

[Turns to others.]

Sir Hugh and Prince John, your conduct is matter for our later consideration. Now, let the Fair go on!

[Kenneth kneels to him and King Richard raises him up.]

Robin

[To all.]

A song to bold King Richard! What say you?

[All cheer. The music strikes up and the curtain comes down to a jovial chorus in praise of King Richard.]

THE END

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