

Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne

Translation by Jalen Thompson

When the summer sun shines bright,
And the leaves on the trees are both large and long,
It is merry when walking in the fair forest,
To hear the small birds song.

The woodwall sang, and would not cease,
Among the leaves of the lime tree.
“And it is by two sturdy yeomen,
By dear God, that I mean.

“I dreamt that they beat and bound
And took my bow from me;
As long as I am alive and named Robin Hood,
I’ll get my revenge on both of these men!”

“Dreams are fleeting, master,” said John,
“As the wind that blows over a hill,
For it never be so loud this night,
Tomorrow it maybe still.”

Robin said, “Prepare you, get ready, my merry men all,
For John shall go with me,
For I’ll go seek yonder a study yeoman
In greenwood where he may be.”

They put on their green gowns,
And walked into the forest,
Until they come to the merry greenwood,
Where they were glad to be;
They saw a sturdy yeomen
With his body leaned on a tree.
The sword and a dagger he wore by his side,
Had been many a man’s murderer,
And he was clad in his horse-skin,
Top and tail and maine.

“Stand still, master,” said Little John,
“Under this trusty tree,
And I will go to the sturdy yeoman,
To know his meaning truly.”

“John, to me you have no chance,

And that's an amazing thing;
How often have I sent my men before me,
And let myself stand behind?

“It takes no skill to know a knave,
And a man but hear him speak;
And if it were not for damaging my bow,
John, I would break your head.”

It was words that caused anger
That parted Robin and John;
John is gone to Barnsdale,
Where he knows the way.

And when he came to Barnsdale,
Great heaviness he had;
He found two of his own fellows
Were both in a forest glade,

And Scarlet was on foot flying
Over stumps and stone,
For the sheriff with seven score of men
Who was fast after him was gone.

“Yet one shot I'll shoot,” says Little John,
“With Christ his might and mine;
I'll make the fellow yonder that flies so fast
To be both glad and happy.”

John bent up a good bow,
And prepared to shoot;
The bow was made of a tender bow,
And fell down to his foot.

“Misery come to you, wicked wood,” said Little John,
“That never you grew on a tree!
For this day has caused me trouble,
When I should be helped!”

This shot was let out inaccurately,
The arrow flew in vain,
And it met one of the sheriff's men;
Good William of Trent was slaine

It had been better for William of Trent

To hang upon a gallow
Then for to lie in the greenwood,
There slain with an arrow.

And it is said, when men meet,
Six can do more than three:
And they had firmly Little John,
And bound him fast to a tree.

“You shall be dragged by a horse,”
Said the sheriff,
And hanged high on a hill.”
“But you may fail,” said Little John,
“If it be Christ’s own will.”

But let us leave Little John,
For he is bound fast to a tree,
And talk of Guy and Robin Hood,
In the greenwood where they be.

How these two yeomen they meet,
Under the leaves of a tree,
To see what business they mean
Even at that same time.

“Good morrow, good fellow,” said Sir Guy;
Good morrow, good fellow,” said Robin,
“I think that by that bow you bear in your hand,
You seem to be a good archer.”

“I am uncertain of my way,” said Sir Guy,
“And of my morning time.”
“I’ll lead you through the wood,” said Robin,
“Good fellow, I’ll be your guide.”

“I seek an outlaw,” said Sir Guy,
“Men call him Robin Hood;
I need to find him,
So that I can receive my payment.”

“If you two met, it would be seen who was better,
But before you did go;
Let’s find some other pastime,
Good fellow, I pray.

“Let us prove our archery skills,
And we will walk in the woods even;
We may by chance meet with Robin Hood
At some unexpected occasion.”

They cut down some some bushes
Which grew both under a briar,
And set them 315 yards apart,
To shoot the prickles full near.

“Lead on, good fellow,” said Sir Guy,
“Lead on, I do bid you.”
“Ay, by my faith,” said Robin Hood,
“I shall go first.”

The first good shot that Robin led
Did not shoot an inch near the center of the target;
Guy was a good enough archer,
But he could not shoot near that shot.

Next, Sir Guy shot,
He shot within the garland;
But Robin Hood shot it better than him,
For he clove the good prick-wand.

“God’s blessing on your heart!” said Guy,
“Good fellow, your shooting is good,
For if your heart be as good as your hand,
You’d be better than Robin Hood.

“Tell me your name, good fellow,” said Guy,
“Under the leaves of this tree.”
“I will, by my faith,” said Robin,
“Until you have told me yours.”

“I dwell by dale and down,” said Guy,
“And I have done many a cursed deed;
And he that calls me by my right name
Calls me Guy of Good Gisborne.”

“My dwelling is in the wood,” says Robin,
“As I stand in front of you now,
My name is Robin Hood of Barnesdale,
The fellow you have long sought.”

He that had neither been friend or relatives
Might have seen a full fair sight,
To see how together these men went,
With blades both stained with blood.

To have seen how these men fought together,
Two hours of a summer's day;
It was neither Guy nor Robin Hood
That prepared to fly away.

Robin did not notice a root beneath him,
And stumbled on it,
And Guy was quick and nimble
And hit him on the left side.

“Ah, dear Lady!” said Robin Hood,
“You are both mother and maiden!
It was never man's destiny
To die before his day.”

Robin thought on Our Dear Lady,
And soon leapt up again,
And thus came with an awkward backhanded stroke;
And Good Sir Guy was slain.

He took Sir Guy's head by the hair,
And stuck it on the end of his bow:
“You have been a traitor all your life,
And that must have an end.”

Robin pulled forth an Irish knife,
And nicked Sir Guy in the face,
So that no one
Could tell who sir Guy was.

He said, “Lie there, lie there, good Sir Guy,
And do not be angry with me;
If you have had the worse strokes at my hand,
You should have the better clothes.”

Robin took off his green gown,
And threw it over Guy's body;
And he put on Guy's horse-skin,
That clad him top to toe.

“The bow, the arrows, and little horn,
And with me now I’ll bear;
For now I will go to Barnsdale,
To see how my men are doing.”

Robin put Guy’s horn to his mouth,
And let out a loud blow
That the sheriff of Nottingham heard,
As he stood under a hill.

“I heard yonder Sir Guy’s horn,
It blew so well in time,
For yonder come that sturdy yeomen,
Clad in his horse-skin.

“Come here, you good Sir Guy,
Ask of me what you will have.”
“I’ll have none of your gold,” says Robin Hood,
“Nor I’ll none of it have.

“But now I have slaine the master,” he said,
“Let me go strike the servant;
This is all the reward I ask,
Nor no other will I have.”

“You are a madman,” said the sheriff,
“You should have had a knight’s fee;
But seeing that you are adamant on striking the servant
It shall be granted.

But Little John heard his master speak,
He knew well that was his voice;
“Now I shall be set loose,” said Little John,
“With Christ’s might in heaven.”

Robin quickly went to Little John,
He thought he would cut him loose at once,
But the sheriff and all his company
Soon came upon the scene.

“Stand back! Stand back!,” said Robin;
“Why draw me so near?
It was never the use in our country
One’s confession another should hear.”

But Robin pulled forth an Irish knife,
And cut John loose from the tree,
And gave him Sir Guy's bow in his hand,
And told him to use it.

John took Guy's bow in his hand
His arrows were rusty with blood at their tips
The sheriff saw Little John draw a bow
And that he was prepared to shoot him.

Towards his house in Nottingham
He fled full fast away,
And so did all his company,
Not one stayed behind.

But the sheriff could not get away
Fast enough
For Little John, with an arrow broad,
Did shoot his heart in two.