Robin Hood and the Beggar I

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COME light and listen, you gentlemen all,
Hey down, down, and a down
That mirth do love for to hear,
And a story true I'le tell unto you,
If that you will but draw near.

In elder times, when merriment was,
And archery was holden good,
There was an outlaw, as many did know,
Which men called Robin Hood.

Vpon a time it chanced so
Bold Robin was merry disposed,
His time to spend he did intend,
Either with friends or foes.

Then he got vp on a gallant brave steed,
The which was worth angels ten;
With a mantle of green, most brave to be seen,
He left all his merry men.

And riding towards fair Nottingham,
Some pastime for to spy,
There was he aware of a jolly beggar
As ere he beheld with his eye.

An old patcht coat the beggar had on,
Which he daily did vse for to wear;
And many a bag about him did wag,
Which made Robin Hood to him repair.

`God speed, God speed,' said Robin Hood,
`What countryman? tell to me:'
`I am Yorkeshire, sir; but, ere you go far,
Some charity give vnto me.'

`Why, what wouldst thou have?' said Robin Hood,
`I pray thee tell vnto me:'
`No lands nor livings,' the beggar he said,
`But a penny for charitie.'

`I have no money,' said Robin Hood then,

`But, a ranger within the wood,
I am an outlaw, as many do know,
My name it is Robin Hood.

`But yet I must tell thee, bonny beggar,
That a bout with thee I must try;
Thy coat of gray, lay down I say,
And my mantle of green shall lye by.'

`Content, content,' the beggar he cry'd,
`Thy part it will be the worse;
For I hope this to give thee the rout,
And the have at thy purse.'

The beggar he had a mickle long staffe,
And Robin had a nut-brown sword;
So the beggar drew nigh, and at Robin let fly,
But gave him never a word.

`Fight on, fight on,' said Robin Hood then,
`This game well pleaseth me;'
For every blow that Robin did give,
The beggar gave buffets three.

And fighting there full hard and sore,
Not far from Nottingham town,
They never fled, till from Robin's head
The blood came trickling down.

`O hold thy hand,' said Robin Hood then,
`And thou and I will agree;'
`If that be true,' the beggar he said,
`Thy mantle come give vnto me.'

`Nay a change, a change,' cri'd Robin Hood;
`Thy bags and coat give me,
And this mantle of mine I'le to thee resign,
My horse and my braverie.'

When Robin Hood had got the beggars clothes,
He looked round about;
`Methinks,' said he, `I seem to be
A beggar brave and stout.

`For now I have a bag for my bread,
So have I another for corn;
I have one for salt, and another for malt,
And one for my little horn.

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`And now I will a begging goe,
Some charitie for to find:'
And if any more of Robin you'l know,
In this second part it's behind.

Now Robin he is to Nottingham bound,
With his bags hanging down to his knee,
His staff, and his coat, scarce worth a groat,
Yet merrilie passed he.

As Robin he passed the streets along,
He heard a pittifull cry;
Three brethren deer, as he did hear,
Condemned were to dye.

Then Robin he highed to the sheriffs house,
Some reliefe for to seek;
He skipt, and leapt, and capored full high,
As he went along the street.

But when to the sheriffs doore he came,
There a gentleman fine and brave,
`Thou beggar,' said he, 'Come tell vnto me
What is it that thou wouldest have?'

`No meat, nor drink,' said Robin Hood then,
`That I come here to crave;
But to beg the lives of yeomen three,
And that I fain would have.'

`That cannot be, thou bold beggar,
Their fact it is so cleer;
I tell to thee, hanged they must be,
For stealing of our kings deer.'

But when to the gallows they did come,
There was many a weeping eye:
`O hold your peace,' said Robin then,
`For certainly they shall not dye.'

Then Robin he set his horn to his mouth,
And he blew but blastes three,
Till a hundred bold archers brave
Came kneeling down to his knee.

`What is your will, master?' they said,
`We are here at your command:'
`Shoot east, shoot west,' said Robin Hood then,
`And look that you spare no man.'

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Then they shot east, and they shot west;
Their arrows were so keen
The sheriffe he, and his companie,
No longer must be seen.

Then he stept to these brethren three,
And away he had them tane;
But the sheriff was crost, and many a man lost,
That dead lay on the plain.

And away they went into the merry green wood,
And sung with a merry glee,
And Robin took these brethren good
To be of his yeomandrie.

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