

Robin Hood and the Black Cloak



In the years of King Richard the Lionheart (1189-1199) there lived a brave and intelligent man called Robin Hood. He was a feared outlaw, who loved liberty and hated oppression. He took the law into his own hands and robbed the rich to give to the poor. People loved him and thought of him as a justice-maker. In time he acquired a heroic reputation and came to represent the ideal of heroism of his age.

Stories about him and his closest friends Friar Tuck, Little John, and Maid Marian may be found in the time. They say that Robin Hood and his companions lived in Sherwood Forest, near Nottingham. They were called the ‘merry men’ and used to wear green clothes, a particular shade of green, called ‘Lincoln green’. They also say that Robin’s outlaws were very well-organized and skilful in their attacks. They were very disciplined and obeyed strict rules of behaviour.



The story goes that one day the Sheriff’s men caught Will Scarlet, one of Robin Hood’s outlaws,

and took him to the Sheriff of Nottingham. ‘We’ve caught one of Robin Hood’s men,’ said one of them. The Sheriff, who was green with envy because all the people loved Robin Hood, said ‘Take him to the gallows in the market square tomorrow! Let people see what happens to Robin Hood’s companions!’

Robin Hood was having dinner with his friends in Sherwood Forest when he heard the bad news. He thought of a plan to rescue his friend. ‘We are on the Sheriff’s back list. He will have no mercy for Will. We must save him before it is too late’. Early the next morning he started out for Nottingham together with his youngest and strongest men. They all wore long coats over their green clothes. Under their coats they carried swords or bows and arrows.

On their way to Nottingham they saw an old man in a dirty black cloak. Robin asked him ‘Any news from Nottingham?’ ‘The news is sad, my Lord,’ the old man said. ‘They are going to hang two prisoners tomorrow, at twelve o’clock. One of them is my nephew, Jim. They caught him red-handed while he was hunting deer in the forest. It is the third time. This means the gallows. He had to do it. He’s got six hungry children. He had no choice.’



‘Wait!’ said Robin. ‘Will you sell me your cloak?’ The old man couldn’t believe his ears. ‘This dirty old thing? Well, you can have it for a pound!’ ‘Thanks,’ said Robin and put on the cloak and gave the old man pounds. ‘For you and your family. Take it.’ The old man was so

surprised that all he could say was ‘God bless you, Sir!’

At twelve o’clock the market square was full of people. Two men with ropes round their hands stood under the gallows. Their faces were white with fear. The Sheriff was there with twelve men. Only the hangman!’ he shouted. ‘Well? Doesn’t anybody here want to do the job? For five pounds?- For ten pounds?’ Nobody answered. Then an old man in a black cloak came forward and said. ‘I can do the job all right.’ At once there were angry shouts from the crowd. People picked up stones and began to throw them at the old

man. A woman took an egg out of her basket and threw it. 'Get on with the job!' cried the Sheriff's, and gave the old man the money.

'Hurry up, man!' shouted the Sheriff. 'What are you doing?' 'Tightening the ropes, Sheriff!' In fact, the old man untightened the ropes round the two prisoners' hands. Then he threw off his black cloak and he turned out to be Robin Hood, dressed in his green clothes with his bow in his hand. The two prisoners got lost in the crowd. At the same time Robin's outlaws in the crowd took off their coats too and ran to help him.

'Stop them! Kill them!' shouted the Sheriff. Robin shot an arrow from his bow into the Sheriff's hat. 'Keep your men back, Sheriff!' cried Robin. The Sheriff got the message. He was red with anger. Before leaving the place he glared at Robin and said, 'I'll catch you one day.' Then Robin threw the ten pounds into the crowd, saying 'A present from the Sheriff!' A moment later, Robin and his men were on their way back to the shadows of Sherwood Forest.