

ROGER LANCELYN GREEN

THE
ADVENTURES
OF
Robin
Hood

PUFFIN CLASSICS



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Prologue
The Birth of Robert Fitzooth

*And mony ane sings o' grass, o' grass,
And mony ane sings o' corn,
And mony ane sings o' Robin Hood
Kens little where he was born.*

*It wasna in the ha', the ha',
Nor in the painted bower;
But it was in the gude green-wood,
Amang the lily-flower.*

BALLAD: *The Birth of Robin Hood*

Although it was a hundred years since the Battle of Hastings, there was no real peace in England. William the Conqueror had divided the country amongst his followers, only in special cases leaving the old Saxon Thanes the ownership of even a small part of what had once been their properties. Often the new Norman earls and barons and knights, and their sons and grandsons also, treated

the Saxons as mere slaves – serfs to till the land for them and follow them in war – serfs with no rights of their own and no chance of real justice.

England was still an ‘occupied’ country in the twelfth century, and although there were no big outbreaks after the death of Hereward the Wake, there were many small ‘underground movements’, and in every forest there were outlaws and gangs of robbers. These forests were the property of the king, and the penalties for killing the king’s deer were cruel and barbarous.

No wonder that in the year 1160 there was little friendship between Saxon and Norman: no wonder Sir George Gamwell of Gamwell Hall in Nottinghamshire, a Saxon knight holding the scarred remnant of his ancestors’ lands, did not encourage young William Fitzooth, son of the Baron of Kyme, when he came wooing his daughter Joanna.

Sir George was short-tempered and fierce, a bitter man who could never forget his wrongs, nor forgive the Normans whose fathers and grandfathers had wronged him.

As it happened, young William Fitzooth had a Saxon mother and a Saxon grandmother, and was already beginning to feel that he was neither Norman nor Saxon, but British – and that the way to find contentment and security for the country was by justice and not by cruelty.

But Sir George would not listen to William, and forbade him ever to enter his house again. Nor would he listen to his

daughter, but ordered her as fiercely to keep to her rooms and have no more dealings with the accursed Norman.

Joanna went weeping away: but she did not obey her father. That night William Fitzooth stood beneath her window, and they swore to be faithful to one another for ever. And not long after, though Sir George had no idea of it, these two were married in secret, meeting like Romeo and Juliet at a nearby chapel.

Then William visited Joanna night by night, climbing perilously to her window in the darkness, and leaving in haste before the daylight came.

Spring turned into Summer, and William was called away for several months to follow his father to London on the king's business. When he returned to Gamwell, a messenger brought him in secret a letter from Joanna.

'I am in sore trouble,' she wrote, 'for, though I keep my bed and fain to be ill, my father will soon know what has chanced between us – and then his fury will be terrible. If he catches you, he will certainly hang you – and I do not know what he will do to me, or to our child when it is born. So come to me quickly, dear William, and carry me away, for I am in constant fear until I feel your strong arms around me.'

Then William called to him three of his most faithful followers, and led them swiftly into Sherwood Forest, where they made their camp not far from Gamwell: for he knew that when Sir George missed his daughter he would suspect him, and seek for her first at Kyme.

When the sun had set, William and his men came silently and stealthily to Gamwell Hall, made their way into the garden, and stood beneath Joanna's window.

She was waiting for them, all ready to flee away, and leapt bravely from the window into the great red cloak which the four held for her. Then William took her in his arms, and carried her slowly and tenderly away from Gamwell and out into the silent forest where the green leaves shimmered in the moonlight and the hoot of an owl or the bark of a fox were the only sounds in the stillness.

When night was gone and the sun shone out, Sir George woke suddenly, and called loudly for his retainers.

'Where is my daughter?' he cried. 'She usually comes to see me at this time in the morning – and there is no sign of her! I dreamt a terrible dream about her – God grant it never comes true! – for I thought that I saw her drowned in the salt sea . . . But look here! If she's been stolen away, or if any harm has come to her – I'll hang the lot of you!'

Then there was fear and commotion at Gamwell Hall, servants running hither and thither, men buckling on their swords, foresters stringing their bows and seeing to their arrows.

Sir George came storming through the midst of them, shouting for his horse and threatening to hang everyone on the spot unless they found his daughter.



At last the chief huntsman came with two of his hounds on a leash, and the whole party set forth into Sherwood Forest following the trail of William Fitzooth.

And later that day they came suddenly upon Joanna, sitting in her woodland bower, and nursing her baby son.

Then Sir George sprang to earth with drawn sword, swearing dreadful things. But when Joanna smiled up at him and placed his little grandson in his arms, he dropped the sword and kissed the child tenderly, exclaiming:

‘By God, I’d like to hang your father – but your mother’s dear to me still, in spite of everything . . . Well, well, you’re my grandson sure enough, and it would be little

kindness on my part to begin by killing your father. Joanna, where is this villain?’

Then William Fitzooth came out from behind a tree and knelt before Sir George, begging his forgiveness and promising to be a special friend to all Saxons for his sweet wife’s sake, and for the sake of his little son who himself was more than half a Saxon.

‘Well, well,’ said Sir George. ‘All shall be forgiven and forgotten. And as for this young person – what do you say his name is? Robert? . . . Well, young Robin, born in the good green-wood, and no stately hall or painted bower; may you be true to the soil of England and bring help to the down-trodden all your days!’

The Good Spirit of Sherwood

*Sherwood in the twilight, is Robin Hood awake?
Grey and ghostly shadows are gliding through the
brake,
Shadows of the dappled deer, dreaming of the morn,
Dreaming of a shadowy man that winds a shadowy
horn.*

ALFRED NOYES: *Sherwood* (1903)

King Richard the First, Richard Cœur de Lion, came to the throne in 1189 – and very soon left his throne empty when he set off on the Crusade to free Jerusalem from the Saracens. He was summoned home by the news of trouble and rebellion – but was captured on the way and shut up in a prison – no one knew where – and in England few believed that he would ever return.

When he went away, Richard left the Bishop of Ely to rule for him, but very soon the King's wicked brother, Prince John, accused the Bishop of treason, made him

fly for his life, and himself became ruler of the country.

John was a cruel, merciless man, and most of his followers were as bad as he. They needed money, and he needed money: the easiest way of getting it was to accuse some wealthy man of treason or law-breaking, make him an outlaw – and seize his house or castle and all his goods. For an outlaw could own nothing, and anyone who killed him would be rewarded.

When Prince John had seized a man's lands he would usually put one of his own followers in his place – provided he paid him large sums of money. Prince John's followers did not mind how they came by this money: for them the easiest way was to take it from the small farmers, the peasants and even from the serf. And not only Prince John's upstart knights and squires did this, but many also of the Bishops and Abbots who were either in league with him, or greedy for their own good like the worst of the nobles and barons.

Many a Sheriff, too, was appointed to keep order and administer justice in the towns and counties by Prince John – provided he paid well for the honour: and of course he had also to force the money from someone weaker than himself, and obey Prince John however cruel and unjust his orders might be.

Such a one was the Sheriff of Nottingham, the little town on the edge of Sherwood Forest, and when Prince

John came and set up his Court there for a time, he was naturally most eager to show his loyalty and zeal.

One evening he and his men came upon a serf who had killed a deer. Without a thought of pity, the Sheriff ordered the poor man's cottage to be searched for money, and when none was found, had it burnt to the ground.

Then the wretched serf was brought before him.

'You know the Forest Laws,' said the Sheriff grimly. 'All right, my men: one of you heat the irons quickly. Blind him, and turn him loose!'

'No, no! Not that!' shrieked the man. 'Anything but that! Kill me straightaway! If you blind me, God will repay you! Mercy! Mercy!'

Prince John had ridden out to see the Sheriff at work, and at this moment he joined the little group round the glowing embers of the cottage.

'What night-jar have we here?' he asked carelessly. 'Surely, good Sheriff, you should have cut out his tongue first. You should keep silent and secret if you expect this bogey Robin Hood to come to his aid, as I've heard tell he does. Why, this man's cries will waken the King in Palestine, or wherever he is now!'

'Silence, you dog!' cried the Sheriff striking the serf roughly across the mouth. 'You ought to know better than to make this unseemly noise in the presence of His Royal Highness Prince John!'

'Prince John! Prince John!' gasped the man. 'Oh, save me, sire! For God's love, save me!'

'Who is he?' asked John casually. 'What has he done?'

'They call him Much,' said the Sheriff importantly. 'He was a miller once. But he was too fond of the King's deer. See, his first and second fingers have been cut off: that tells its own story – a bowstring pulled unlawfully. Now we've caught him at it again: the law lays it down that for a second conviction for deer-slaying, a man shall have his eyes burnt out. A third time – and he hangs. But I'll warrant he'll find it hard to shoot a deer when we've done with him: I've never known a man to shoot by smell – ha! ha!'

The Sheriff laughed heartily at his own joke, and Prince John was pleased to smile.

'Well, fellow?' he said to poor old Much, who still knelt trembling before him.

'So please your highness,' gasped Much, 'they burnt my mill to make a wider hunting-ground and a way to the stream so that the deer could come there to drink. How could I get my food but by hunting? It's hard to shoot straight and true lacking the arrow fingers, and true and straight must a man shoot if he would kill lawful game, the rabbit and the wood-pigeon . . . I had two children, one died of want, and my boy, young Much, was crying out for food . . . We cannot live long upon grass and herbs like an ox, nor upon the roots that the swine eat.'



'Oh,' said Prince John, 'so you decided to try a richer diet, did you? The king's deer! . . . Was there no other way? No, no, Master Sheriff, let me deal justly with him . . . What of this Robin Hood of whom tales are told? Some rich man, they say – a yeoman or a nobleman born of some old Saxon family – who, mad fool, brings help to such dirt as you and your kin of law breakers, kills the king's deer himself, and has even robbed a purse on the highway before now . . . Well, where is he? And, more to the point, *who* is he? Tell me that, and you shall keep your eyes to see your way to the gallows one day, I'll be bound!'

‘I know not who he is!’ gasped Much. ‘Robin Hood comes out of the forest – men say he is the Good Spirit of Sherwood – and having brought help, he goes away as silently as he came. No one has seen him by daylight . . .’

‘Faugh!’ cried Prince John impatiently. ‘Take him away and do your work on him out of my sight. These rogues are too loyal for my liking, or for their own good.’

So four of the Sheriff’s men dragged poor Much away while a fifth drew the glowing irons from the fire which had been his home and followed grimly at his heels. But suddenly with a desperate cry he tore himself loose, snatched a sword from one of them, and made a rush at Prince John. He never reached him, however, for with a sudden vicious whine an arrow sped from behind them and laid him dead on the ground.

‘A good shot, truly,’ remarked Prince John, ‘though I could wish that it had but maimed him. A dead man is no bait for this Robin Hood . . . Who was it loosed this arrow?’

He turned as he spoke, and saw advancing towards him from the edge of the glade a short dark man wearing a green cloak over his suit of brown leather.

‘My lord,’ said the man, bowing very low before Prince John, ‘I am called Worman, Steward to Robert Fitzooth, Earl of Huntingdon.’

Prince John’s smile twisted itself suddenly into a scowl of anger.

‘Earl of Huntingdon, indeed!’ he exclaimed, ‘I have

heard tell of this nonsense before – David Lord Carrick is the Earl – Northumberland's son. What pretence is this?

'Pardon me, my lord,' protested Worman, cringing before Prince John. 'Hereabouts men call Fitzooth Earl of Huntingdon, by right of his mother and the Saxon line of the old Earls. He is my master, so I dare not call him otherwise!'

Prince John nodded. 'I would know more of this supposed Earl,' he said in his most cruel and silky tones. 'Is he loyal, think you?'

'To King Richard – yes,' answered Worman with meaning in his voice.

'Richard – Richard – everywhere Richard!' snarled John. 'Richard is dead – or as good as dead – rotting in some dungeon. That mad minstrel Blondel will never find him! I am King: King in all but name . . . This fellow Fitzooth: is he rich? Are his lands wide?'

'Once they were wide indeed,' said Worman, 'but now only the house and lands of Locksley remain to him. The other lands he has sold.'

'Ha, then his coffers must be full of gold!' cried Prince John.

'Even I his Steward do not know that,' answered Worman. 'I know only that he has some secret need for money, though what it is he keeps to himself and no one in his household knows except his friend and body-servant William Scathlock.'

'How could I see him unknown?' mused Prince John. 'If

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‘How could I see him unknown?’ mused Prince John. ‘If

I heard but a word of treason – well, we would see what was in those coffers . . . And you, my good fellow, should have your pickings – if you prove true and secret.’

‘Against my master?’ said Worman. ‘Can I betray him? . . . But indeed my duty to you, sire, overweighs all other duties . . . Then I will tell you how it can be done. Tomorrow Earl Robert is to be married at Fountains Abbey to the Lady Marian, daughter of Lord Fitzwalter. Tonight he holds a great feast in his own great house of Locksley Hall: all guests will be welcome and no close watch kept as to who they are. If you and the Sheriff come disguised – as palmers from the Holy Land, perhaps, with some tall tale of King Richard – you will have a ready welcome.’

‘I like the scheme,’ exclaimed Prince John who, for all his faults, never lacked courage. ‘Come with me, good fellow; and you, Master Sheriff, gather your men and come also: we have little time to waste. Leave that dead dog there – as a warning to Robin Hood should he come this way.’

When they had ridden off into the grey of the evening, and silence had fallen upon Sherwood once again, certain bent and maimed figures began to creep out of the nearby thickets and gather round the body of old Much the miller which lay where it had fallen near the still smoking ashes of his home.

‘He’s dead,’ exclaimed one of them. ‘Well, better than blinding . . . These are cruel times.’

‘Aye,’ cried another, ‘but when the King comes home from the Crusade, things will be better.’

‘But if he never comes back,’ muttered a third, ‘then that devil Prince John will be King – and God have mercy on us then.’

‘Here’s that poor lad Much, son of the man they’ve murdered,’ interrupted another. ‘What can we do for him? The old man went out to shoot a deer, for hunger drove him to it . . . Which of us can feed this poor orphan lad?’

There was a general murmur of pity while the boy Much knelt weeping by his father’s body. Then somebody said quietly:

‘Robin Hood will not let him starve. Look, here comes his man, Will Scarlet, carrying a sack. May God and Our Lady bless this Robin Hood who comes to our aid like some very angel.’

A man had walked quickly into their midst as he spoke, a tall man of some forty years of age whose costume of russet and scarlet well suited the name by which these poor outcasts knew him.

‘Have courage, my friends!’ cried Will Scarlet, lowering the heavy sack as he spoke. ‘My master and your true friend Robin Hood has sent me with this, fearing lest you should hunger. For he knows that the Sheriff and his men have been out in the Forest this day – and they ever leave misery and want behind them.’

‘God’s blessing on brave Robin Hood!’ chorused all of

them, except the boy who still knelt weeping by the still body.

Scarlet went over to him and laid a hand gently on his shoulder.

‘So they have killed old Much,’ he said. ‘Have comfort, boy: he is at peace, and has been spared many evils. It was a quick death, see the arrow has transfixed his heart . . . Strange, that arrow never came from Nottingham armoury: it is such a one as my master and his servants use.’

‘Good Will Scarlet!’ cried the boy, turning to him suddenly. ‘Let me come with you and serve your noble master too. I know I am but twelve years old – but sorrow brings us quickly to manhood – and I would be revenged on these accursed murderers.’

‘Speak not of revenge,’ said Will Scarlet gently. ‘It is for justice that we fight . . . But come with me. We have need of a bold lad like you – and one who can be trusted, even to the death as your father could be trusted.’

‘Aye, aye,’ chorused the group round about them. ‘Be sure the old man died rather than betray your master, and so would any one of us. God save Robin Hood – King Richard and Robin Hood!’

How Robert of Locksley Became an Outlaw

*This youth that leads yon virgin by the hand
Is our Earl Robert, or your Robin Hood
That in these days was Earl of Huntingdon;
The ill-fac'd miser, brib'd in either hand
Is Worman, once the steward of his house,
Who, Judas like, betrays his liberal lord.*

ANTHONY MUNDAY: *The Downfall of Robert Earl of
Huntingdon (1601)*

In Locksley Hall that night all seemed peaceful and happy enough as his friends and tenants feasted in honour of Robert Fitzooth's wedding with Marian Fitzwalter which was to take place on the morrow.

Earl Robert stood near the great fireplace welcoming his guests: a fine, well-built man of some thirty years, handsome, brown-haired with a short beard and clear eyes behind which seemed to lurk a shadow – of pity and

of determination. All his movements were quick, but none of them was hurried; he was the man of action, the leader who could see things clearly and, in a flash, deliver his order and act upon his decision with swift accuracy and perfect coolness.

The Lady Marian Fitzwalter stood beside him. She was some five years younger than he, tall and beautiful, but strong and fearless also, a very fitting wife for such a man.

So certainly thought most of those present, as they came up in turn to offer their congratulations, or their services according to rank, or joined from time to time in a hearty song followed by the old Saxon pledge of 'Waes hael!' as they raised their goblets or silver-mounted horns of mead or ale to the two of them.

Two palmers however, who had come in late, led by Worman the steward, did not seem so eager in their toasts.

'I smell treason, there's no doubt of it!' muttered the darker of the two.

'It's a whole nest of traitors, your Highness,' agreed his companion. 'They'll give us proof before long, you may depend upon it!'

As if to bear out his words, a group of foresters dressed all in Lincoln green, who stood near the door, began to sing:

*Long live Richard,
Robin and Richard!
Long live Richard!*

Down with John!
Drink to the Lion-heart
Everyone!

‘Down with John, indeed!’ said the dark palmer grimly. ‘Now I trust that my disguise is good – and that master Worman, the false steward, won’t waver again in his loyalties! Hallo, what have we here?’

As the song ended there was a slight stir near the doorway and a tall forester dressed in russet and scarlet appeared pushing his way through the throng, and leading a boy by the hand.

The second palmer stiffened suddenly like a pointer-dog smelling game.

‘My lord,’ he whispered to his companion. ‘That boy is the son of old Much the miller whom you saw shot this afternoon when he escaped from those who would so justly have burned out his eyes for deer-slaying on a second charge.’

‘Indeed, my good Sheriff,’ replied the supposed palmer. ‘This false Earl Robert harbours the sons of traitors and criminals, does he? . . . But here comes Master Worman.’

‘How now, Master Worman?’ asked the disguised Sheriff in an undertone. ‘What does this mean?’

‘Yonder is Earl Robert’s man, William Scathlock,’ answered Worman, ‘and he brings with him the son of that traitor who threatened your highness this afternoon,

and in whose black heart I was lucky enough to plant an arrow.'

'Well?'

'Your Highness, when I inquired for Much the Miller's son – never mind from whom – they told me that all was well with him since a certain Will Scarlet had come and taken him away to be cared for by Robin Hood!'

'Will Scarlet! . . . Robin Hood,' mused Prince John. 'The devil! . . . Master Worman, and you, good Sir Sheriff, we are in better luck than ever we dreamed of! Do you not see? Will Scarlet takes Much to the care of Robin Hood . . . William Scathlock brings that same Much to the care of Robert Fitzooth – to that false Earl Robert who sells his lands and uses the proceeds so mysteriously . . . Why, my good fellows, it is proof positive . . . And that song they were singing:

*Long live Richard,
Robin and Richard!*

Yes, there's no doubt of it . . . Well, your fortunes are made. Tomorrow this traitor Robert or Robin is declared an outlaw – and you take and hang him forthwith. Then of course all his lands and goods are forfeit to me: I take them – and that attractive young heiress the Lady Marian lacks a husband . . . She has one waiting for her though, as I know well, and one true to my cause . . . Yes, Sir Guy of

Gisborne shall have her – and with her father’s good will, or I am much mistaken in my man . . . And Sir Guy shall pay me a fine fat dowry for his bride!’

No one suspected the two supposed palmers at Earl Robert’s feast, but none the less there was an air of anxiety over the wedding preparations in the chapel of Fountains Abbey next day.

Lord Fitzwalter seemed troubled and uneasy, though his daughter Marian was calm enough, even though she and her father stood waiting at the altar some time before Earl Robert rode up to the door with his troop of bowmen. Placing his men in the aisles in military formation – much to Lord Fitzwalter’s surprise and the Abbot’s indignation – Earl Robert only then came forward to take his place beside Marian.

Looking anything but pleased, the fat little Abbot began to intone the ceremony, his long lines of monks chanting the responses in the wide chancel behind him.

But before ever the words were spoken which would make Robert and Marian man and wife, there came the sound of galloping hooves, the clash and jingle of armour, and into the chapel strode a knight with a drawn sword in his hand and followed by a band of men at arms.

‘What means this sacrilege?’ cried the Abbot, torn between fear and indignation.

‘Hold!’ cried the knight. ‘I, Sir Guy of Gisborne, come

in the King's name to forbid this ceremony to proceed! Pursuivant, read the mandate!

A man dressed in the livery of the Sheriff of Nottingham stepped forward, unrolled a parchment, and read in a loud voice:

'Be it known to all, in the name of Prince John, Regent of all England, that Robert Fitzooth, known as Robert Earl of Huntingdon – known also as Robin Hood; for as much as he hath aided the King's enemies, broken the King's laws, and is a traitor to the King and to those by him set in authority; that the same Robert Fitzooth or Robin Hood is hereby declared outlaw, his lands and goods forfeit, and his person proscribed and banished. In the name of Richard our King and of the Regent, Prince John!'

'Sir Guy,' said Robert quietly, 'this is an ill quest you come on, and all unworthy of the high order of knight-hood which you profess. As for this mandate, I question its force! Show me King Richard's seal attached to it . . . You cannot. Show me then the seal of My Lord Bishop of Ely the King's only lawfully appointed Regent . . . Why, that is missing from the mandate also! . . . Tell me wherein I have played the part of a traitor – and wherefore I, Robert Fitzooth, Esquire of Locksley and Earl of Huntingdon, should answer for the supposed misdeeds of this mythical wood-demon called Robin Hood who is surely no more than a bogey raised by the credulity and superstition of the ignorant!'

Guy of Gisborne laughed harshly.

‘This is no time for jests and fairy tales,’ he cried. ‘We all know that you have ever flouted the laws and striven to set the serfs against their masters. Why, the very act of calling yourself Earl of Huntingdon in right of your mother’s Saxon forbears shows you as a traitor: the old Saxon earls were deprived and outlawed for refusing to obey their rightful King, William of Normandy, and only the Earldom created by the King has any right in law. As for your trespasses in the matter of the Forest Laws – everyone knows your skill in archery – and there are few travellers in these parts who have not eaten the King’s venison under your roof. Finally, it is useless to pretend ignorance of the crimes committed by you under the false name of Robin Hood. How many among your own followers are proscribed felons who are said to belong to Robin Hood’s band? . . . What of his lieutenant who is also of your household? . . . What of Much, the Miller’s son, whom Robin Hood has under his care – in *your* house of Locksley Hall?’

‘Why then,’ came the quiet answer, ‘here and now Robert Fitzooth, Earl of Huntingdon, ceases to be. You have called me Robin Hood: both you and your Sheriff – yes and Prince John himself shall live to fear that name. And not only you, but all those like you: the abbots and bishops who grow fat on the sufferings of the poor; the Norman knights and barons who break both the King’s law and the law of God in their cruelties and oppressions – yes, and all

their kind shall go in terror so long as Robin Hood reigns in Sherwood Forest: in Sherwood, and wherever else wrongs need to be righted – until King Richard comes home from the Crusade and there is justice once more in this fair land of England.’

Then, turning to Marian Fitzwalter who had stood all this while by his side, Robin said gently:

‘Lady Marian, did you give your love to the Earl of Huntingdon whose lands stretch from the Trent to the Ouse, or to plain Robin Hood the outlaw who returns now to the home of his birth under the green leaves of Sherwood Forest?’

‘Neither to the Earl nor to his Earldom,’ answered Marian firmly, ‘but to the man whom I love and whose wife alone I shall be.’

‘Indeed, I thought no other,’ said Robin gravely, ‘and though the ceremony is but half completed, I hold that we are none the less man and wife in the sight of God and of this congregation . . . Lord Fitzwalter, to your care I commit your daughter: guard her well at Arlingford Castle, and I will demand her of you again when King Richard is here to place her hand in mine.’

‘To that also I swear!’ cried Marian. ‘You, Robin, are my lord and my husband, and no other shall ever be aught to me, though I live and die a maid!’

‘Go quickly now,’ said Robin to Lord Fitzwalter, ‘and go you quickly with him, sweet Marian. No, you cannot help

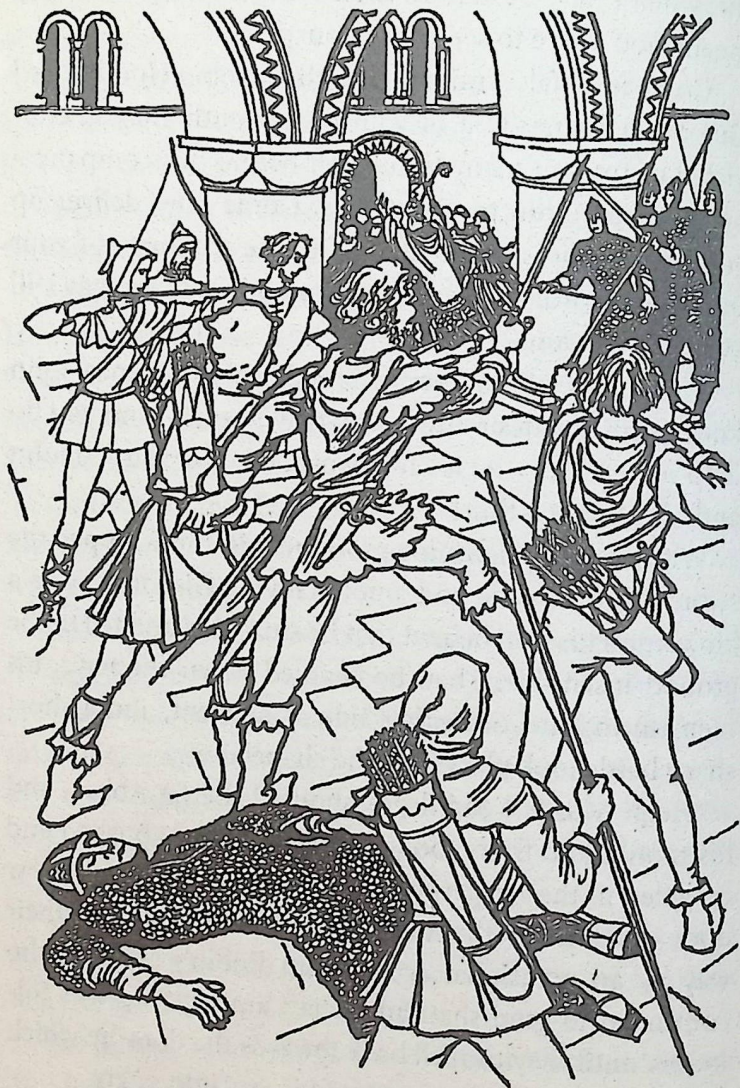
me: when I have beaten off these curs, I ride to the merry greenwood, there to set up my court!

'Come now, false traitor and outlaw Robin Hood!' cried Guy of Gisborne. 'Out of your own mouth are you convicted of treason many times over before this company – whom I call upon to witness . . . Come now, deliver up your sword and submit yourself to the authority of your undoubted lord, Prince John. If you do so, there may still be mercy for you!'

'He knows of no mercy!' cried Robin. 'Prince John knows only the desires of his own evil heart – and you do ill to serve him . . . As for my sword, I deliver it up to John and his officers – thus!'

With a sudden lightning movement Robin whipped the sword from his side and smote Guy of Gisborne such a blow upon his iron helmet that he stumbled and fell to the ground insensible. Then he charged down the nave, his men closing in from either side as he went, and a short sharp battle took place near the chapel door.

'Help! Murder! Sacrilege!' shouted the fat Abbot, and his monks and friars took up the cry as they pushed and crowded in their eagerness to escape through the narrow door which led to the Abbey. They were speeded on their way by an occasional arrow from Robin's archers who continued to send shaft after shaft among Sir Guy's followers until they too fell back towards the door by which the Abbot had already squeezed his way into safety.





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