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OF
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ROBIN HOOD

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1816.

ROBIN HOOD.

THE reign of King Richard the First was very different from the times we now live in. The roads were very bad, and were beset with robbers; and there was a great number of large forests and parks in the country, well stocked with deer. At that time lived the famous Robin Hood: he was born in the village of Locksley, in Nottinghamshire, and his father was very skilful in the use of the cross-bow. His mother had a brother named Gamewell, of Great Gamewell-hall, near Maxwell, in the same county, but at the distance of twenty miles from the house of Robin Hood's father.

When Robin Hood was about thirteen years old, his mother said one day to his father, "Let Robin and me ride this morning to Gamewell-hall, to taste my brother's good cheer." Her husband answered, "Do so, my dear; let Robin Hood take my grey horse, and the best bridle and saddle; the sun is rising, so pray make haste, for to-morrow will be Christmas-day." The goodwife then made no more ado, but put on her holiday petticoat and gown, which were green. Robin got his basket-hilt sword and dagger, and his new suit of clothes; and so rode with his mother behind him till he came to Gamewell-hall.

Squire Gamewell made them welcome twenty times, and the next day six tables were set out in the hall for dinner; and when the company was come, the squire said to them, "You are all welcome, but not a man here shall taste my ale, till he has sung a Christmas carol." They now all clapped their hands, and shouted and sang till the hall and the parlour rung again. After din-

ner the chaplain said grace, and the squire once again bid his friends be merry. "It snows and it blows out of doors," said he, "but we are snug here; let us have more ale, and lay some logs upon the fire." He then called for little John, "For," said he, "Little John is a fine lad at gambols, and all sorts of tricks, and it will do your hearts good to see him." When Little John came, he was indeed as clever as the squire had said; but Robin Hood got up, and played all the very same tricks, and better still. The squire was quite glad to see this, and he said, "Cousin Robin, you shall go no more home, but shall stay and live with me; you shall have my estate when I die, and till then you shall be the comfort of my age." Robin Hood agreed to this, if his uncle would but give him Little John to be his servant.

One time, when Robin Hood was gone to spend a week with his father and mother, squire Gamewell was taken ill. In those days the people of this country were of the Roman-Catholic religion; there was a con-

vent of priests near Gamewell-hall, called Fountain-Abbey; and the squire sent for one of the priests or monks to come and read prayers by his bed-side. Fountain-Abbey was a very fine building; it had a large mansion in the centre, and a capital wing on the right side; but there was no wing on the left, so that the building was not complete. Now, the monk that came to Gamewell-hall was very sorry about this, and wished very much to have a left wing to his abbey; so he made the squire believe that he could not die like a good man, unless he gave the whole of his estate to Fountain-Abbey. The squire was very ill, and hardly knew what he did; he forgot Robin Hood, and all that he had said he would do for him, and signed a paper that the monk brought him, to give away his estate. As soon as Robin Hood heard that his uncle was very ill, he made haste home; but the squire was dead a quarter of an hour before Robin came. The monks now turned Robin Hood out of the hall; and

as his father was poor, Robin was thus sent out into the world to seek his fortune.

Robin Hood did not know what to do; he had been used to live like a rich man, and did not know how to work, for he had learned no trade. He now got together a number of young men, who had been brought up like himself, and were just as poor; and they went to live what they called a merry life, in Sherwood forest, near Nottingham. Here there was plenty of deer, and Robin Hood and his company were very excellent marksmen at shooting them with the cross-bow; but they wanted something besides meat to eat, so they at once turned robbers. After this no man could travel alone through Sherwood forest without being stripped of his money. Robin Hood, and his company too, did not confine themselves to Sherwood forest, but went to plunder other parts of England. His gang soon grew to above a hundred in number, and they were some of the tallest, finest, and boldest men in the kingdom. Robin Hood dressed them in a

uniform; he himself always wore scarlet; and each of his men had a green coat, a pair of breeches, and cap.

Though Robin Hood was a robber, which, to be sure, is a very bad thing, yet he behaved in such a manner as to have the good word and good wishes of almost all the poor people in those parts. He never loved to rob any body but people that were very rich, and that had not the spirit to make good use of their riches. As he had lost his estate by the cunning of a Popish priest, he had a great dislike to the whole set; and the Popish priests at that time behaved in such a manner, that hardly any body liked them; so that Robin Hood was not thought the worse of for his usage of them. When he met with poor men in his rambles, instead of taking any thing from them, he gave them money of his own. He never let any woman be either robbed or hurt; and, in cases of hardship, he always took the part of the weak and the injured against the strong; so

that it was truly said, "that of all thieves he was the gentlest and most generous thief."

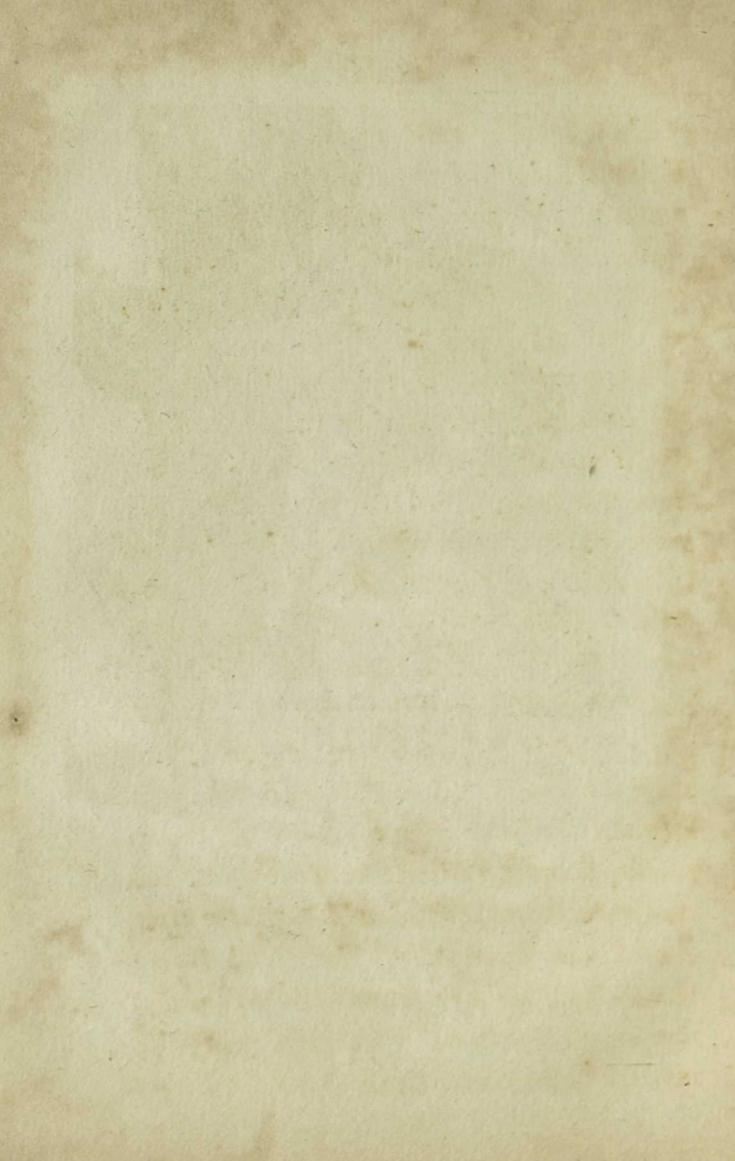
Robin Hood was fond of doing strange and odd things, and he loved a joke quite as well as he loved a good booty. One day, as he strolled in the forest by himself, he saw a jolly butcher riding upon a fine mare, with panniers on each side filled with meat. "Good morrow, good fellow," said Robin; "whither are you going so early?" Said the other, "I am a butcher, and am going to Nottingham market to sell my meat." "I never learned any trade," said Robin, "I think I should like to be a butcher. What shall I give you for your mare and your panniers, and all that is in them?" "They are not dear at four marks," said the butcher, "and I will not sell them for less." Robin made no words, but counted out the money; and then made the butcher give him his blue linen coat and his apron, in exchange for Robin Hood's fine uniform of scarlet.

When Robin Hood had dressed himself in this manner, he rode straight to Nottingham,

The sheriff of Nottingham was master of the market, and Robin Hood hired a stall there. But we may very well suppose that he did not know much about his trade; and indeed, as long as he had any meat to sell, no other butcher could sell a single joint; for Robin Hood sold more meat for a penny than the others could do for five. "To be sure," said they, "this is some young fellow that has sold his father's land." The butchers then went up to Robin Hood: "Come, brother," said one of them, "we are all of one trade, will you go and dine with us?" "I should be a shabby fellow," said Robin, "if I was ashamed of my calling; so I will go with you." The sheriff was the tavern-keeper, and sat at the head of the table; and after dinner Robin Hood would insist upon paying the bill. The sheriff was a cunning old miser, and when he saw how madly Robin Hood behaved, he thought he would not miss such a chance of turning a penny. "Good fellow," said the sheriff, "hast thou any horned beasts to sell to me?"



ROBIN HOOD



“That I have, good master sheriff,” said Robin Hood, “I have a hundred or two, if you will please to go and see them.” The sheriff then saddled his good palfrey, and took three hundred pounds in gold, and away he went with Robin Hood.

The road they took led through the forest of Sherwood; and as they rode along, the sheriff cried out, “God preserve us this day from a man they call Robin Hood!” But when they came a little further, there chanced to come out of the thicket a hundred good fat deer, skipping very near them. “How do you like my horned beasts, master sheriff?” said Robin Hood; “these are the cattle I told you of.” “To tell you the truth,” replied the sheriff, “I wish I were away, for I do not like your company.” Then Robin Hood put his bugle-horn to his mouth, and blew three times; when suddenly there came out of the wood Little John and Robin Hood’s hundred men, clothed in green, and running all in a row. “What is your will, master?” then said Little John. “I have

brought hither the sheriff of Nottingham," said Robin Hood, "this day to dine with me." "He is welcome," said Little John, "I hope he will pay us well for his dinner." Robin Hood now made the sheriff sit down under a tree; and after they had all eaten and drunk enough, he opened the sheriff's bag, and told out his three hundred pounds. He then seated the sheriff on his palfrey again, and led him out of the forest. "Remember me kindly to your wife," said Robin Hood, and so went laughing away.

As Robin Hood was walking one day in the forest, he took notice of a handsome young man, dressed in very fine clothes, frisking over the plain, and singing. When Robin Hood passed the same spot the next morning, he saw this same young man come drooping along; his fine dress was laid aside, his hair was loose about his shoulders, and at every step he sighed deeply, saying, "Alas! and well-a-day!" Robin Hood sent one of his company to bring the young man to him. "What is the distress," said Robin Hood,

“that hangs so heavy on your heart? Why were you so merry yesterday, and why are you so sad to-day?” The young man now pulled out his purse. “Look at this ring,” said he, “I bought it yesterday; I was to have married a young maiden whom I have courted for seven long years, and this morning she has gone to church to be married to another.” “Do you think she loves you?” said Robin Hood. “She has told me so,” said Allen-a-Dale, for that was his name, “a hundred times.” “Then she is not worth caring about,” said Robin Hood, “for changing in her love.” “She does not love him,” replied Allen-a-Dale. “Why do you think so?” said Robin Hood. “He is a poor crippled old fellow,” said Allen-a-Dale, “and quite unfit for such a young and lovely lass.” “Then why does she marry him?” said Robin Hood. “Because the old knight is rich,” replied Allen; “and her father and mother insist upon it, and have scolded and stormed at her till she is as gentle as a lamb.” “Where is the wedding to take place?” said

Robin Hood. "At our parish," replied Allen, "only five miles from this place; and the bishop of Hereford, who is the knight's brother, is to read the service."

Robin Hood said no more, but put off his scarlet suit, and dressed himself like a harper, with a harp in his hand. He told twenty-four of his company to follow at a little distance; and then went alone into the church, and found the bishop putting on his robes. "What do you want here?" said the bishop. "I am an harper," said Robin Hood, "the best in four counties round: I heard there was to be a wedding, and I am come to offer my service." "You are welcome," said the bishop; "I shall be glad to hear your music." Soon after this the bride and bridegroom came in. The old knight hobbled along, and was hardly able to walk up to the altar; and after him came a maiden as fair as the day, blushing like the summer-morning. "This is not a fit match," said Robin Hood, "and I cannot agree to its taking place; but since we are come to the church, the bride shall

choose for herself." Then Robin Hood put his horn to his mouth, and blew into it; when straight four-and-twenty archers were seen leaping along the churchyard path, and came in at the porch. The first man was Allen-a-Dale, to give Robin Hood his bow.

Robin Hood now turned to the fair maiden, and said, "Now, my love, you are free; tell me whom you will have for your husband. Will you have this feeble and gouty old knight, or will you have one of the bold young fellows you now see before you?" "Alas!" said the young maid, and dropped her eyes on the ground as she spoke, "young Allen-a-Dale has courted me for seven long years, and he is the man I would choose." "Then," said Robin Hood, "you and Allen shall be married before we leave this place." "That shall not be," said the bishop, "the law of the land requires that they should be three times asked in the church, and a marriage cannot be huddled up in this way." "That we will try," said Robin Hood; and he then pulled off the bishop's

gown, and put it upon Little John. "Indeed," said Robin Hood, "you make a grave parson." When Little John took the book into his hand, the people began to laugh; and he asked them seven times in the church, lest three times should not be enough. Robin Hood gave away the maiden; the bishop slunk out of the church; and his brother, the old knight, hobbled after as well as he could. The whole company had a dinner upon two fat bucks in Sherwood Forest, and from this day Allen-a-Dale was a friend to Robin Hood as long as he lived.

In the time of Robin Hood, the bishops were under the orders of the Pope of Rome; and they were great officers, and even soldiers. Robin Hood lived in the see of the bishop of Hereford. Now, Robin had a great dislike to the Popish clergy, because one of them had cheated him of his uncle's estate; and the bishop of Hereford had quite as much dislike to Robin, because of the trick Robin had played him in the marriage of Allen-a-Dale, and because he did not think it right



ROBIN HOOD

that such a robber should live in his see. The bishop, therefore, made several journeys into the Forest of Sherwood, to take Robin prisoner, and bring him to the gallows.

One time, when Robin was walking alone in the Forest of Sherwood, he heard the trampling of horses; and looking round, he saw his old enemy the bishop of Hereford, with six servants. The bishop was very near Robin Hood before Robin looked round and saw him; and he had nothing to trust to, but the swiftness of his heels, to save him from danger.

As Robin ran along, he chanced to come up to a cottage where an old woman lived all by herself; so he rushed in, and begged her to save his life.—“Who are you,” said the old woman, “and what can I do for you?” “I am an outlaw,” replied he, “and my name is Robin Hood; and yonder is the bishop of Hereford, with all his men, who wants to bring me to the gallows.” “If thou be Robin Hood,” said the old woman, “as I think thou art, I would as soon lose my own life, as not do all in my power to save thee.

Many a time have Little John and you done me a kindness, and brought me venison; and no longer ago than last Saturday night thou gave me a pair of new shoes, and this green kirtle." "Then," said Robin Hood, "give me thy green kirtle, and thy close-eared cap, and put into my hands thy distaff and spindle, and do thou take my scarlet mantle and my quiver and bow."

As soon as they had made this change, Robin Hood left the house, and went to the place where all his company were to be found. He looked behind him a hundred times for the bishop, who had no thoughts of finding him in this disguise. One of the robbers, who was a spiteful fellow, as Robin Hood came near them, cried out, "A witch! a witch! I will let fly an arrow at her." "Hold thy hand," said Robin Hood, "and shoot not thy arrows so keen, for I am Robin Hood thy master." Then he went up to Little John, and said, "Come, kill a good fat deer, for the bishop of Hereford is to dine with me to-day."

While this was going on, the bishop came to the old woman's house; and seeing a man, as he thought, with a mantle of scarlet, and a quiver and a bow in his hand, he shook his head, and said, "I am afraid you are one of Robin Hood's gang. If you have not a mind to be hanged yourself, shew me where that traitor is, and set him before me." The old woman agreed to this.—"Go with me," said she to the bishop, "and I think I can bring you to the man you want." The bishop then mounted her upon a milk-white steed, and himself rode upon a dapple grey; and for joy that he should get Robin Hood, he went laughing all the way. But as they were riding along the forest, the bishop saw a hundred brave bowmen, drawn up together under a tree. "Oh! who is yonder?" said the bishop, "ranging within the wood?" "Why," said the old woman, "I think it is a man they call Robin Hood." "Why, who art thou?" said the bishop; "for to tell thee the truth, I thought thou hadst been Robin

Hood himself." "Oh! my lord," said she, "I am an old woman."

By this time Robin Hood and his company came up to the bishop; and Robin Hood, taking him by his hand, said, "My lord, you must dine with me to-day, under my bower in merry Barnsdale. I cannot feast you like a bishop, but I can give you venison, ale, and wine, and I hope you will be content."

After dinner Robin made the music to strike up, and would insist upon the bishop's dancing a hornpipe in his boots, and the bishop was forced to submit. The day was now far spent, and the bishop begged leave to go away. "You have treated me very nobly," said he to Robin Hood, "and I suppose I must pay for it. Tell me how much."

"Lend me your purse, master," said Little John, "and I will settle it for you." He then spread the bishop's cloak upon the ground, and opening his bag, he counted five hundred pounds out of it. "Now," said Robin Hood, "we thank you for your company; and to shew you that we know how to

be polite, we will see you part of the way home." They then led the bishop and his servants quite through the wood, till they brought him to the high road: then Robin Hood's gang gave three cheers; and told him to remember, that though he had come meaning to hang them all, they had done him no harm.

One day in summer-time, when the leaves grew green, and the flowers were fresh and gay, Robin Hood and his merry men were all in a humour to play. Some would leap, some would run, some would shoot at a mark, and some wrestled with each other on the green. Robin Hood was haughty and proud, and said, "Now, my good fellows, do you think there is a man in the world that could wrestle or play the quarter-staff with me, or kill a doe or buck so sure as me?"

While Robin Hood was boasting in this manner, Will Scarlet stepped out from the rest. Will Scarlet was a little of kin to Robin Hood, and thought he had as good a right himself to be captain of the gang. Besides,

he was rather spiteful: he was just going to shoot an arrow at Robin Hood, when he saw him dressed like an old woman. "If you wish to meet with your match," said Scarlet, "I can tell you where you can find him. There is a friar in Fountain Abbey—" Now, Fountain Abbey was the convent that had been built with the money that Robin Hood's uncle Gamewell's estate had been sold for, and perhaps Will Scarlet chose to throw it in Robin's teeth for that reason. "I had as soon you had talked of the gallows," said Robin Hood. "No matter for that," said Will Scarlet; "there is a friar in Fountain Abbey, that can draw a strong bow against any man in the world; he can handle a quarter-staff too; and will beat you and all your yeomen, set them in a row."

Robin Hood was a man of a bold spirit, and could not rest till he had seen this friar; so he slung his bow across his shoulder, and took his quarter-staff in his hand, and away he went to Fountain Dale. He had not gone far, before he saw a tall brawny friar walk-



ROBIN HOOD

ing by the water-side; and Robin Hood thought this must be the man, the moment he saw him.

Robin got off his horse, and tied him to a thorn. "Carry me over this water, thou brawny friar," said he, "or thou hast not an hour longer to live." The friar did not grumble; but stooped, and took Robin upon his back. The water was deep, and the passage was long and not easy; and neither of these rivals spoke a single word, till they came to the other side. Robin then leaped lightly off the friar's back, and seemed going away. "Stop," said the friar, "carry me over this water, thou fine fellow, or it will breed thee pain." Robin took the friar upon his back, and neither of the two spake a single word, till they came to the other side. The friar then leaped off Robin's back, while Robin said to him again, "Carry me over the water, thou brawny friar, or it shall breed thee pain." The friar once more took Robin upon his back; but this time he did not carry him over, for as soon as he had got to the

middle stream, he threw him into the water. "And now choose, my fine fellow," said he, "whether thou wilt sink or swim." Robin swam to the shore; and when the friar was come to the same place, Robin said to him, "I see by this trial that thou art worthy to be my match." Robin challenged him in wrestling, in shooting, and at the quarter-staff; but Robin could not beat the friar, nor the friar beat Robin in any of these. "I wish from my soul," said Robin, "you would quit this lazy life, and come and be one of us; we range the forest merry and free, and are as happy as the day is long." "I wish from my soul," said the friar, "thou wouldst leave thy rambling and wicked life, and come and live in our convent. Thy thefts will bring thee to a bad end, but I shall live out my days quiet and respected." Robin could not persuade the friar, and the friar could not persuade Robin; so they shook hands and parted.

Robin Hood knew very well that his way of life was against the laws; and that if he

were once caught, it would go very hard with him. He had now been in this way for several years; and began to wish that he could change his way of living for a quiet dwelling in the village where he was born. While he had thoughts of this sort, one time, when he took many rich prizes, he resolved to make a present to the queen. The name of the queen was Eleanor; she was the mother of King Richard the First, who had great power in her son's reign.

Queen Eleanor was very much pleased with Robin Hood's present, and said to herself, "If I live one year to an end, I will be a friend to thee and all thy men."

Soon after this, King Richard made a grand match in his court, of all the bowmen of his guards and his army. Queen Eleanor thought this a good time to do what she had in her mind; so she called her favourite page, whose name was Richard Partington, and gave him his errand. The page set out straight to Sherwood Forest; and when he came to Robin Hood, he said, "Queen Eleanor greets you

well; she bids you post to London, where there is to be a match at the cross-bow, and she has chosen you and your men to be her champions."

On the day of this great match, the king's bowmen, who were thought the best archers in all England, were ranged on one side. After a time, the queen's champions came in, and were ranged on the other side: they were all strangers, and no man in the court knew any of them. King Richard then declared what the prize was that should be bestowed upon the conquerors, and the lords of the court began to make bets upon the venture. The bets were three to one in favour of the king's men. "Is there no knight of the privy council," said Queen Eleanor, "who will venture his money on my side? Come hither to me, Sir Robert Lee, thou art a knight of high descent." Sir Robert Lee begged the queen to excuse him from such a trial. "Come hither to me, thou bishop of Hereford," said Queen Eleanor, "for thou art a noble priest." Now, this bishop was

Robin Hood's old foe. "By my silver mitre," said the bishop, "I will not bet a penny." "If thou wilt not bet on the queen's side," said Robin Hood, "what wilt thou bet on the king's?"—"On the king's side," said the bishop, "I will venture all the money in my purse." "Throw thy purse on the ground," said Robin Hood, "and let us see what it contains." It was a hundred pounds. Robin Hood took a bag of the same value from his side, and threw it upon the green.

When the match was just going to begin, Queen Eleanor fell upon her knees to the king her son. "A boon, a boon," said she, "I must ask a boon of thee before the trial begins." "What is it?" said King Richard. "Why," replied the queen, "that you will not be angry with any of those that are of my party; and that they shall be free to stay in our court all the days of the match, and shall then have forty days to retire where they like." The king agreed to this. When the keepers of the course were marking out

the distance from which they should shoot at the butt, their captain cried out, like a bold boaster as he was, "Measure no mark for us, we will shoot at the sun and the moon." But he was mistaken; for Robin Hood and his party cleft with their arrows every wand and stick that was set up, and won all the money. Says the bishop of Hereford, "I know very well now who these fellows are; they are Robin Hood and his gang." The king replied, "If I had known that, I would not have granted them leave to depart; but I cannot break my word." Saying this, King Richard ordered a noble feast for Robin Hood and his yeomanry, and then sent them away with honour.

King Richard often thought upon what he had seen of Robin Hood and his fellows. He was very fond of archery; he had heard many generous actions that were told about them, and he admired their gallant spirit and manners. Thought he, "If I could but make these men my faithful subjects, what a pride they would be to my court!" The

king at last fixed upon a plan by which he might see Robin Hood once more.

He called twelve lords of his court, and told his plan to them; and then he and his lords all dressed themselves like so many monks, and away they rode to Sherwood Forest. Robin Hood saw them at a distance, as they were coming, and resolved to rob them. The king was taller than the rest, and Robin Hood judged that he was the abbot; so he took the king's horse by the bridle, and said, "Abbot, I bid you stand: it was a priest that first worked my ruin, and I have sworn to spare none of his fellows."—"But we are going on a message from the king," said Richard. Robin Hood then let go the bridle, and said, "God save the king, and confound all his foes!" "Thou cursest thyself," said Richard, "for thou art a robber, an outlaw, and a traitor." "If you were not his servant," said the other, "I should say, You lie; for I never yet hurt man that was honest and true, but only those who give their minds to live upon other people's earnings,

I never hurt the farmer who tills the ground; I protect women and children, and the poor for twenty miles round are the better for me."

Robin Hood then asked the strangers to dine with him. "You would not be used so," said he, "if you were not the king's servants; yet, for King Richard's sake, if you had as much money as ever I told, I would not deprive you of a penny." Then Robin Hood put his horn to his mouth, and blew a shrill blast, when a hundred and ten of his company came marching all in a row. The king thought, this is a fine sight; these men of Robin Hood's obey their captain better than his people did him.

After dinner, the king said to Robin, "What would you give, my brave fellow, if I could get your pardon from your king? Would you set your mind firmly in every thing to be a true and useful subject?"

This was the very thing that Robin wanted; it was the wish that had haunted his thoughts night and day; it was with the

hope of this that he made the rich present to Queen Eleanor.

“ My friend,” said Robin, “ I am tired of the lawless life that I lead ; I never loved it. Other men may praise my bold adventures and generous actions ; but I hate my way of living, and every thing that belongs to it. King Richard is a noble prince, and a gallant soldier ; and if he would take me into his favour, he should never have reason to repent it, but should find me the most faithful and loving of all his subjects.”

“ I am King Richard,” said the stranger ; and when he had said this, Robin and all his company fell upon their knees before him.

“ Stand up, my brave fellows,” said the king ; “ you have been robbers, and you ought not to have been such. The greatest miser in my kingdom ought not to be treated with force, but to be persuaded to dispose of his money properly. But you are brave fellows ; you say that you are well inclined, and you have power and skill to do me service. I freely grant to every one of you my par-

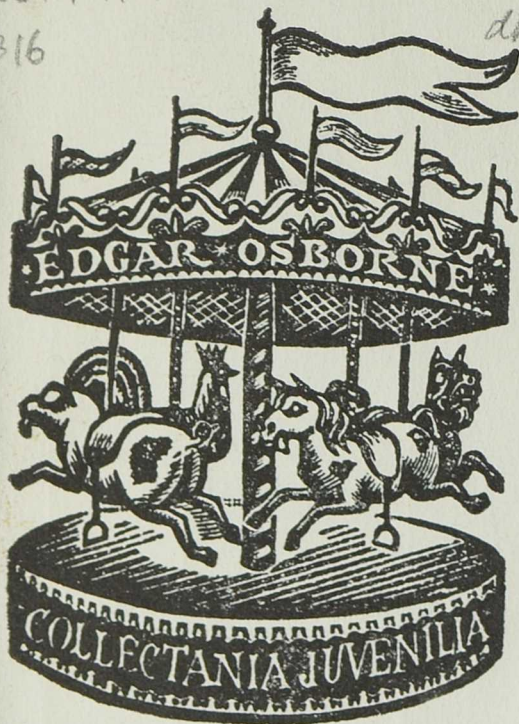
don. Not one of you shall be called to account for any thing that is past; only take care that you behave yourselves in such a manner in future, that I never may have reason to repent the kindness that I now treat you with."

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