For Judy, Molly, Fraser and Darby – members of my merry band

MEDIEVAL OUTLAWS

TEN TALES IN MODERN ENGLISH

EDITED BY
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A GEST OF ROBYN HODE

Thomas H. Ohlgren

INTRODUCTION

As depicted in film and television, the modern Robin Hood contrasts markedly with the late medieval yeoman outlaw from the West Riding of Yorkshire, who, together with his three comrades – Little John, Will Scarlock and Much the Miller's son – waylay and rob travellers on the road from Doncaster to Ferrybridge. While they spare 'gode yeman', they vow to 'bete and bynde' rich churchmen and the Sheriff of Nottingham. The four commit real crimes: deer poaching, jail breaking, theft, extortion, armed robbery and murder. And, although they are threatened with capture, imprisonment and execution by corrupt local officials, they invariably escape unharmed or are pardoned by 'Edwarde, our comly kynge', who recognizes in them their dynamic energy, intense loyalty and essential goodness. The early rymes of Robin Hood develop a series of thematic contrasts between forest and town, natural law and man's law, yeoman and aristocrat, secular and religious.

Of the thirty-eight Robin Hood ballads collected by Francis James Child, three are considered the earliest in date: *Robin Hood and the Monk* (Child, # 119), *Robin Hood and the Potter* (Child, # 121), and *A Gest of Robyn Hode* (Child, # 117).[1] The first two survive in manuscripts dated about 1450 and 1500 respectively, while *A Gest of Robyn Hode* exists only in five printed or black letter texts of the sixteenth century.[2] The two earliest versions are those of Jan Van Doesborch of Antwerp around 1510 and Wynkyn de Worde around the same time or earlier. Although no manuscript survives, most scholars agree that the poem was compiled in the fifteenth century from pre-existing sources and material of the poet's own devising.

Genre

The genre or story type has been variously described as a ballad, tale, *ryme* or *talkyng*. Since traditional ballads were sung, the *Gest* is not a ballad in the conventional sense; instead, it was orally recited or chanted by a minstrel. It is, as David C. Fowler observes, recited minstrelsy, characterized by such features as the opening formula to 'lythe and lysten', the division into eight parts or fitts,

the use of narratorial transitions ('Let's leave that monk in silence, and speak about the knight . . . '), and the use of direct address to the audience ('You will hear some good mirth!'). Moreover, it represents a transitional form of poetry that was developing in the fifteenth century 'when the metrical romance tradition of the later Middle Ages joined the mainstream of folksong to create a type of narrative song which we now call the ballad'.[3]

Dating

The precise dating of the *Gest* is complicated by the fact that it is a compilation of pre-existing sources, including earlier ballads (now lost) a miracle of the Virgin Mary and unidentified romance elements. Both internal and external evidence point to the mid-fifteenth century (during the reign of Henry V, 1413–22, or Henry VI, 1422–61) as the probable time of its composition/compilation.[4] The historical time depicted is, however, about a hundred years earlier in the reign of Edward III (1327–77). A close reading of the allusions, the genre of one of the eight sections or fitts, and the military, feudal and social practices in the poem all suggest the 1330s and 1340s as the historical time being depicted.[5]

Structure

The 1,824 verses, arranged in 456 four-line stanzas, are divided into eight parts or fitts. It cannot be determined if this arrangement is due to the early sixteenth-century compositor or to the fifteenth-century poet-compiler.[6] The presence of oral formulas, narratorial transitions and direct addresses to the audience all suggest oral performance at some stage, but we must be careful in assuming that the printed texts represent faithful transcriptions of their manuscript copy texts. Parts 1, 3, 5 and 6 all open with the poet-minstrel calling the audience to attention ('Lythe and listin, gentilmen'), indicating perhaps an original four-part structure. Moreover, the use of transitions (i.e., 'Now is the knight gone on his way.'), repeated words linking two parts (i.e., 'our comly king', last line of part 6, and 'The king came', the first line of part 7) and coda-like summarizing comments at the end of some parts (i.e., 'God, who sits in high Heaven, Grant us to fare well') reinforce the original four-part structure (parts 1–2, 3–4, 5, 6–7). This arrangement, however, disrupts the dramatic continuity, isolating part 5 by itself, when its matter – the sheriff's attack on Sir Richard's castle – is continued at the beginning of part 6.

Audience

If the identification of the historical context is correct, we can then ask: by whom and for whom was *A Gest of Robyn Hode* created? Earlier critics are sharply divided

on the issue of production and consumption. R.H. Hilton argued that the poems were created for peasant yeomen, expressing their discontent about intolerable social and economic conditions.[7] By contrast, J.C. Holt located the popularity of Robin Hood among the household retainers and dependents of the northern aristocracy and landed gentry.[8] Disagreeing with both of these views are R.B. Dobson and J. Taylor, who posited Robin Hood as a new type of hero for a new social group: 'the greenwood legend can and should be seen as an expression of social aspiration based on the real economic progress achieved by many Englishmen in the years before and after 1400'.[9] The new social group – yeomanry – emerged following three waves of bubonic plague in 1348–9, 1361–2 and 1369. The resulting population decrease produced a labour shortage, which affected wages, prices and farm production, and led to a population shift from the rural manors to villages and towns, where freemen, in spite of the repressive measures of the Statute of Labourers (1351), sold their services to the highest bidders. The more enterprising yeomen, particularly those possessing skilled crafts, quickly rose in social and economic standing, and by the end of the fourteenth century, 'the wealthier freeholders were not easy to distinguish in their way of life and their social prestige from some of the knightly class'.[10]

The status term 'gentlemen', which previously designated 'gentle' or noble birth, now replaced the older term 'franklin' and marked the social position next below knights and esquires.[11] The *Gest* poet addresses his audience directly as 'gentlemen' who are 'of freeborn blood' (ll. 1, 574, 1,126, 1,266). Robin Hood, in addition, is clearly identified as 'a good yeoman' (l. 3). The status term 'yeoman' encompassed a broad spectrum of the Third Estate or bourgeoisie, ranging from, as witnessed by Chaucer's *General Prologue*, the Yeoman, the Guildsmen and their Cook, and the Merchant.[12] The Yeoman, with his 'cote and hood of grene' and his 'myghty bowe' and 'shief of pecok arwes' represents the the 'old' yeomanry – servitor to the landed aristocracy. The five Guildsmen – 'An Haberdasshere and a Carpenter, A Webbe, a Dyere, and a Tapycer' – represent the 'new' merchant yeomanry, which was achieved by becoming a free citizen of a town, owning property and a business, being elected a master or alderman of a guild and serving the economic needs of the king, lord or municipality. Their ostentatious dress and silver knives, their wives' demands to be called 'my lady', and their personal servant, the Cook, all mark these craftsmen and proprietors as urban *nouveaux riches*. They no doubt would insist on being called 'gentlemen'. Their Cook later tells the incomplete tale of a victualler and his 'riotous servaunt' Perkin Reveller, who, as an apprentice, resides at the lower end of the mercantile scale. Apprentices were not admitted to the guilds until they had served their apprenticeships, which usually lasted from seven to ten years. Some of these indentured workers formed their own organizations, called yeoman fraternities. By contrast, the London Merchant, who deals in importing and exporting, represents the most powerful and important group, the Merchants of the Staple (exporters of wools, woolfells and skins) or the Merchant Adventurers (dealers in cloth and wine). These burghers steadily gained political power, and in 1374 they were given the right to elect all of the City officials, including the Mayor.[13] Thus, as a status term, 'yeomanry' covered a broader spectrum of the 'middle' class, while 'gentlemen' designated the upward mobility made possible by education, marriage, inheritance, achievement and service. When we consider the themes and underlying ideology of the *Gest*, it becomes clear that the poet is appealing to a range of people, from apprentices, day labourers and journeymen to small proprietors and liveried merchants.

Themes and Ideology

I am using the term 'ideology' in Martin Seliger's sense of 'sets of ideas by which men posit, explain, and justify ends and means of organized social action, and specifically political action, irrespective of whether such action aims to preserve, amend, uproot or rebuild a given social order'.[14] The *Gest* then can be seen as promoting and legitimizing the interests of one social group in the face of opposing interests. Earlier scholars have seen the main opposition in terms of the forest versus the town, church and court. The forest has been enshrined as the imagined refuge, the securely collective world and the fully natural state to which the oppressed underclass has escaped in order to reconstitute the 'liberties of the greenwood'. Simon Schama characterizes the forest as 'a place where the conventions of gender and rank are temporarily reversed in the interest of discovering truth, love, freedom and, above all, justice'.[15] The forest encapsulates the virtues of an ideal realm: loyalty, fidelity, honour, chivalry, brotherhood, solidarity, magnanimity, hospitality, ceremony and courage. Opposed to the forest are the engrossing negative values of the dominant social, political and economic powers – the court, church and town, so marked by statutory law, cash nexus, oppression and corruption.

While these oppositions are powerfully present in the *Gest* and the other outlaw narratives, there is another subtext at work that has been largely unnoticed by previous commentators. The world of the forest has already been penetrated by the values of the town market-place, revealing what Michael Nerlich calls a 'change of consciousness' from the courtly-knightly ideology of adventure to mercantile self-awareness and self-fashioning.[16] The virtues celebrated in courtly romance – martial prowess, voluntary daring, quest for unpredictable risk, loyalty to a revered lady, solidarity of the group and largesse – have been conserved, imitated and appropriated by the urban merchant and artisan classes, who are the producers and consumers of the Robin Hood poems. The outlaw of Sherwood, then, fulfills the need for a mercantile hero to replace the knightly hero of the aristocratic romances. Robin Hood's imitation of courtly behaviour and forms in the *Gest* is not mere

flattery but dialectical: imitation – appropriation – domination, if only in imaginative terms.

Robin Hood, who is clearly identified as a yeoman, imitates knightly behaviour by giving liveries and fees to his retained men; by acting in a courteous manner (the word 'curteyse' is used seventeen times); by refusing to eat until he is visited by an unknown guest (like King Arthur in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*); by showing respect to his social superiors in lowering his hood and kneeling; and by granting a boon to the wife of Sir Richard at the Lee, the impoverished knight. Indeed Robin exhibits all of the courtly virtues enumerated by Michael Nerlich, but he also personifies the concomitant commercial virtues of the guildsman or merchant. In the first section of the poem, Robin offers to help the bankrupt knight, Sir Richard, by *lending* him £400 to pay off his loan to the rapacious Abbot of St Mary's. Moreover, Little John suggests that they give him a 'lyveray' because his clothing is 'full thynne'. Robin can well afford the gift because there is 'no *marchaunt* in mery Englond/ So ryche in scarlet and grene' cloth (my italics). Before agreeing to lend Sir Richard the money, Robin asks for a 'borowe' or guarantor, and when the knight pledges God Himself, Robin turns him down flat, demanding 'a better borowe . . . Or money getest thou none'. The fact that Robin offers a loan to be repaid and not a gift is made clear when he states that the money is to be repaid in twelve months to the day. In addition to being cast as a money lender (Robin replaces the Jewish money lender in the source, "The Merchant's Surety'), he also plays the role of cloth merchant in another scene when King Edward asks him if he has any green cloth to sell. Robin replies that he has 'thyrty yerdes and thre'. Although the actual sale is not depicted, the story implies that a deal was made and coin exchanged for Lincoln green cloth.

Beyond these scenes in which commercial activity is described, there are many other examples of mercantile ideology. The entire poem, in fact, reflects guild policies and practices as preserved in records from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. There were some 600 merchant and craft guilds scattered throughout England at this time, and many records survive in the form of royal charters, statutes, licences, by-laws, ordinances and writs.[17] Some of the shared features are:

1. Patronage by the Virgin Mary;
2. Adulation of the monarch;
3. Organization and officers of the fellowship;
4. Recruitment of new members by offering them liveries and fees;
5. Election feasts;
6. Entertainments;
7. Charity to the poor;
8. Penalty for perjury;
9. Processions or 'ridings'.

A Gest of Robyn Hode registers a crucial moment in the social and economic transformation of late medieval England, when the merchant adventurer replaces, if not opposes, the feudal petty nobility. We are, in short, witnessing the birth of capitalism, albeit in imaginary terms.

Translator's Note

The translation is based upon the edition of the *A Gest of Robyn Hode* in Knight and Ohlgren, *Robin Hood and Other Outlaw Tales*, pp. 80–168.

TRANSLATION OF *A GEST OF ROBIN HODE*

Part 1

Attend and listen, gentlemen, who are of freeborn blood, I shall tell you about a good yeoman,[1] whose name was Robin Hood. While he was alive, he was a proud outlaw,[2] and no outlaw was found who was as courteous. Robin stood in Barnsdale,[3] leaning against a tree, with the good yeomen Little John, Will Scarlock, and Much the Miller's son, who was every inch a man. [See plate 18.]

Little John spoke to Robin, 'Master, it would do you much good if you dined early.' Then Robin replied to him, 'I have no desire to eat until some bold baron, strange visitor, lord or sire, or knight or squire will come to pay for the meal.'[4]

Robin's custom was to hear three Masses everyday before he dined: one in honour of God the Father, another of the Holy Ghost, and the third of Our Dear Lady, the Virgin Mary, whom he loved the best of all. For fear of deadly sin, Robin loved the Virgin.[5] He would never do any harm to a company that any woman was in.[6]

Then said Little John, 'Master, if we shall spread our table, tell us where we shall go, and what life we shall lead? What shall we take, and what shall we leave behind? Where shall we wait behind? Where shall we rob, and where shall we despoil? Who shall we beat and tie up?'

'No matter,' then said Robin, 'we shall do well enough, but look that you do no harm to any small farmer, who tills with his plow. Nor shall you harm any good yeoman who walks by the greenwood thicket, or a knight or a squire who would be a good fellow. However, you should beat and tie up bishops and archbishops, and don't forget the Sheriff of Nottingham.'[7]

'Your wishes will be kept', said Little John, 'and this lesson we will learn. It is far on in the day – God send us a guest – so we can have our dinner!'

Robin replied, 'Take your good bow in your hand, and let Much the Miller's son and William Scarlock go with you, and no man stay with me. Walk up to the Saylis and to Watling Street and look for some unknown guest.[8] If he is an earl,

baron, abbot or knight, bring him to stay with me — his dinner will be waiting for him.'

The three yeomen went up to the Saylis, but when they looked east and west, they didn't see anyone. But as they looked towards Barnsdale, a knight came riding through a secret way, and at once they met him. His appearance was sad and little was his pride. One foot was in his stirrup, while the other dangled beside. His hood hung over his eyes as he rode in plain clothing. A sorrier man never rode on a summer's day! [9]

Little John went down on his knee courteously and greeted the knight, 'You are welcome, gentle knight, welcome you are to me. And welcome to the greenwood, noble and courteous knight. My master has awaited you without food for three hours.'

'Who is your master?' asked the knight. Little John replied, 'Robin Hood.' 'He is a good yeoman,' said the knight, 'about him I have heard much good. I agree to accompany you, my fellows, although I had planned to dine today at Blyth or Doncaster.'[10] This gentle knight went forth with a sorrowful expression as the tears ran from his eyes and fell down his face.

When Robin Hood saw him arrive at the door of the hut, he courteously took off his hood and knelt down on one knee, saying, 'Sir knight, welcome, I have been waiting for you without my dinner for three hours.' The knight then answered with fair and noble words, 'God save you, good Robin and all your fair company.' After washing and wiping their hands, they sat down to dinner.[11] They had bread and wine in plenty as well as deer sweetbreads. They also had fine swans, pheasants and river-bank birds. They lacked not even the smallest bird that was born on a branch. 'Eat well, sir knight,' said Robin. 'Thank you, sir,' replied the knight, 'I haven't had such a dinner in three weeks, and if I come this way again, Robin, I shall make you as good a dinner as you have made me.' 'Thank you, knight,' said Robin, 'when I have that dinner, by God, I won't be as ravenous as you were! Oh, by the way, I think it is only right that you pay me before you leave. You know, it was never the custom, by God, for a yeoman to pay for a knight.'

The knight replied, 'I'm ashamed I have no money in my money chest.' 'Little John,' Robin orders, 'go and look and don't delay. By God, sir knight, tell me the truth.'[12] 'As God is my witness,' the knight replied, 'I have no more than ten shillings.' 'If you don't have any more than that, I'll not take a penny', said Robin, 'and if you have need of more I'll lend it to you. Go ahead Little John, tell me the truth. If there isn't any more than ten shillings, I won't touch a penny.'

Little John spread the knight's mantle on the ground, and found there just half a pound. He let it lie alone and went to his master. 'What is the news?', Robin asked. Little John replied, 'Sir, the knight is telling the truth.' Robin said, 'Let's fill our cups with the best wine, and let the knight begin. Sir knight, tell me why your clothing is so threadbare? Tell me in a word, and I'll counsel you. Were you made a knight by compulsion or else by yeomanry?[13] Or were you a miserable farmer and lived in conflict and strife? Were you a usurer, or else a lecher', asked Robin, 'who wrongly led your life?' 'By God who created me, I am none of those,' said the knight. 'My ancestors have been knights for one hundred years. It often happens, Robin, that a man is deprived of his status, but God, who sits in heaven above, may amend his state. Within the last two years, Robin, my neighbours know it well that I had £400 of good money to spend, but now I have no possessions. May God, who shaped such an end, amend my difficulties for the sake of my wife and children.' 'How did you lose your riches?' Robin asked. The knight replied, 'By my great folly and my kindness. Robin, I have a son who in truth should have been my heir. When he was twenty years old, he killed a knight from Lancaster and his bold squire while jousting in a tournament. To save him I sold my goods and pledged my lands as security for a loan from the rich abbot of St Mary's Abbey in York'.[14] 'Tell me the truth, what is the sum due?' asked Robin. 'Sir,' the knight answered, 'the abbot counted out to me 400 pounds.' 'If you lose your lands, what will happen to you?' Robin asked. 'I will have to hurry over the ocean', the knight answered, 'to see where Christ lived and died on the mount of Calvary. Farewell friend and goodbye, it may not be otherwise.' As tears fell from the knight's eyes, he wished to go on his way, saying, 'Farewell, friend, and have a good day, I have no more to pay.'

'Sir knight,' Robin asked, 'where are your friends?' 'Not one will recognize me,' said the knight. 'While I was rich enough at home, they boasted that they knew me, but now they run away from me like scared beasts. They pretend that they had never seen me before.' Little John, Will Scarlock and Much wept together for pity. 'Fill your cups with the best wine', said Robin, 'and let's put on a cheerful face. Do you have any friend who will guarantee my loan to you?' The knight replied, 'I have none but God who died on the Cross.' 'Do away with your jokes,' then said Robin, 'do you seriously believe that I would accept God, Peter, Paul or John as guarantors? No, by God who made me and created both sun and moon, find me a better securer of the loan, or you won't get any money from me.' 'To tell the truth,' said the knight, 'I have none other than Our Dear Lady, who has never failed me before this day.' 'By dear worthy God,' Robin replied, 'searching throughout England, I never found better security for my money.[15] Little John, come forward now, go to my treasure box, and bring me £400 — and make sure that it is accurately counted.'

Little John and Scarlock went and counted out £400. Little Much asked, 'Is it counted correctly?' And Little John replied, 'What's the matter with you? It is charitable to help a noble knight who has fallen into poverty. Master, because the knight's clothing is threadbare, you must give him a livery to wrap his body in. You have plenty of fast-dyed scarlet cloth and many rich clothes. I dare say that there is no merchant in merry England as rich as you.'[16] 'Little John, give him three yards of every colour', says Robin, 'and make sure it is properly measured.'

Using his bow stave as a measure, Little John added three feet to every handful of cloth. Little Much exclaimed, 'Who do you think you are, the Devil's draper?' Standing still and laughing, Will Scarlock said, 'By Almighty God, Little John is giving him good measure because it isn't costing him anything.' Then said Little John to noble Robin Hood, 'Master, you must give the knight a horse to carry home these goods.' 'Give him a gray courser and a new saddle', said Robin, 'because he is Our Lady's messenger, and God grant that he is true.' 'And a good saddle horse', said Little Much, 'to maintain him in his right.' 'And a pair of boots for he is a gentle knight,' said Scarlock. 'And what will you give him, Little John?' asked Robin. 'Sir, a pair of gilded shining spurs and a prayer from all this company that God will deliver him from sorrow.'

Then the knight asked, 'Robin, when shall I repay you,' and Robin answered, 'Twelve months from this day under this greenwood tree.' [See plate 19.] Robin then said, 'It would be a great shame for a knight to ride alone without a squire, yeoman, or page to walk by his side. I'll lend you Little John, my man, to be your servant. If you have great need, he will serve you as a yeoman.'

Part 2

Now the knight is gone on his way, and he thought the arrangement was good. When he looked back towards Barnsdale, he blessed Robin Hood. And when he thought of Barnsdale and Will Scarlock, Much and Little John, he blessed them as the best company that he was ever in. That gentle knight then spoke to Little John, 'Tomorrow I must go to St Mary's Abbey in York[17] and pay the abbot of that place £400. If I am not there by this night, my land will be lost for ever.'

Meanwhile in the hall of the Abbey of St Mary, the abbot spoke to his convent, 'Twelve months ago a knight came here and borrowed £400, pledging his lands as security. If he doesn't come today he will be disinherited.' 'It is still too early,' said the prior, 'the day is not yet over. If it were me I'd rather pay the £100 right away, but the knight is far beyond the sea fighting for England's right and suffers hunger and cold and many a sorry night.[18] It is a great pity to take his land. Abbot, you are too light of your conscience and do him much wrong.' The abbot replied, 'By God and St Richard of Chichester, you are always in my beard![19] At that moment the chief cellarer of the order, a big-headed monk, entered the room and said, 'The knight is either dead or hanged. By God that redeemed me, we shall have his £400 pounds a year income to spend in this place.'

The abbot and the high cellarer hurried on boldly because the high justice of England was in their pay. The justice and many others had taken the knight's debt in their hands and intended to do him wrong. The abbot and his accomplices judged him severely: 'Unless he comes today, he shall be dispossessed.' The justice added, 'I declare that the knight will not come.' But to their sorrow, the knight arrived at the abbey gate.

The noble knight then spoke to his retinue, 'Now put on your modest clothing that you brought over the sea.'[20] They put on their simple clothing and came to the abbey gate where the porter, standing ready, welcomed them all. 'Welcome, sir knight,' said the porter, 'my lord is at dinner, and so is many a noble man in your honour.' Looking at the knight's horse, the porter swore a great oath, 'By God that created me here is the best built horse that I've ever seen. Lead the horses into the stable so that they can be refreshed.' But the knight replied, 'By God that died on a tree, they shall not go within.'

In the abbot's hall, the lords were seated at dinner. The knight entered, knelt down, and greeted them all. 'Eat well, sir abbot, I have come as agreed upon.' The abbot responded at once, 'Have you brought me my money?' 'By God that created me, not one penny,' replied the knight. 'You are a wicked debtor,' said the abbot, as he turned to the justice and said, 'Sir justice, let's drink a toast to our victory!' The abbot then said, 'What are you doing here if you haven't brought my money?' 'To beg for an extension on my loan,' cried the knight. The justice blurted out, 'You have missed your payment and your land is lost.' 'Now good justice, be my friend and protect me from my enemies!', the knight begged. 'No,' said the justice, 'I have been retained by the abbot with both cloth and fee.' [21] Turning to the sheriff, the knight implored, 'Now, good sheriff, be my friend!' 'Nay, for God,' he replied. Finally turning to the abbot, the knight says, 'Now, good sir abbot, be my friend, and as an act of courtesy retain my lands in your hand until I have paid my debt to you! And I will be your true servant and serve you until I obtain the £400 of good money.' Swearing a great oath, the abbot replied, 'By God that died on a tree, get yourself land where you may but you get none from me.' 'By dear worthy God who created all this world,' said the knight, 'if I don't get my land again, someone is going to suffer for it. God who was born of a maiden grant us well to succeed! It is good to test a friend before a man has need.' The abbot looked on the knight with hatred and shamefully shouted at him, 'Get out, you false knight, hurry out of my hall!' 'By God who created us, abbot, you lie,' said the knight. 'I was never a false knight.' The noble knight then stood up and said to the abbot, 'You don't know good manners to allow a knight to kneel so long. I have been in jousts and tournaments and have been in as great danger as anyone I've ever seen.'

The high justice then asked the abbot, 'How much will you give so the knight will release his claim? Unless you do this you will never hold the land in peace.' The abbot replied, '£100.' 'Give him £200,' the justice said. 'No, by God,' said the knight, 'you won't get it that easy. Even if you gave a £1,000 more, you would be no nearer success – the abbot, justice and friar will never be my heirs.' The knight approached the round table and shook £400 out of a bag. 'Here, have your gold, sir abbot, that you lent me. If you had been courteous when I arrived you would have received a bonus.' The abbot sat still and ate no more of his splendid food. Lowering his head, he stared at the knight. 'Give me my gold

again, sir justice, that I paid to you as a retainer,' said the abbot. 'By God who died on the Cross, no, not a penny,' replied the justice. 'Sir abbot and men of law,' said the knight, 'now that I have fulfilled my debt, I will have my land again in spite of anything you can say.' The knight went out the door without a care in the world, discarded his modest attire, put on his good clothing and went forth singing merrily.

When he arrived at his home in Verysdale,[22] his wife met him at the gate of his castle, and said, 'Welcome, my lord, are all your possessions lost?' 'Be merry, madam,' said the knight, 'and pray for Robin Hood that his soul go to heaven. He helped me out of trouble, and if it hadn't been for his kindness we would be beggars. The abbot and I reached an agreement, and he has been paid his money. The good yeoman lent it to me as I came along the road.'

The knight then dwelt pleasantly at home, to tell the truth, until he had collected the £400 with which to repay Robin Hood. He provided himself with one hundred bows with well-fitted strings and one hundred sheaves of good arrows with brightly burnished points. And every arrow was forty-five inches long, fletched with peacock feathers and nocked with white silver – they were a fine sight. He also purveyed one hundred archers, provided them and himself with gear and red and white liveries.[23] Bearing a light lance, he rode singing a song towards Barnsdale, while a servant carried his trunk.

When he reached Wentbridge, the knight stopped to watch a wrestling match.[24] All the best yeomen of the West Country were there. A splendid contest was going on, the winner receiving a white bull, a great horse with saddle and gold-burnished bridle, a pair of gloves, a red-gold ring and a cask of wine.[25] There was a yeoman, the best wrestler in the place, who was afraid he would be slain because he was a stranger in those parts. The knight took pity on the yeoman in the place where he stood. Because of his love of Robin Hood, he said that a yeoman should not be harmed. The knight and his one hundred men with their bent bows and sharp arrows pushed forward into the place in order to put that crowd to shame. Gathering together and making room, the crowd wanted to know what the knight had to say. He took the yeoman by the hand and declared him champion. Giving him five marks (£3 6*s* 8*d*) for the cask of wine lying on the ground, the knight ordered that it should be tapped and set running and invited all to drink. Thus this noble knight tarried until that sport was done. Meanwhile, Robin Hood, who was waiting for the knight in Barnsdale, went without food for three hours after noon.

Part 3

Attend and listen, gentlemen, all who be here now, about Little John, who was the knight's servant. You will hear some good mirth! Upon a merry day, the young men of Nottingham held a shooting match, and Little John fetched his

13. Map of the northern countries, from Olaus Magnus, *History of the Northern Peoples*, Rome, 1555.

24. Sir William Wallace, Scottish patriot, *c.* 1272–1305.

25. An outlaw being dragged to the gibbet: accused of killing Richard, Earl Marshall, in 1234, William de Marisco was outlawed, captured and executed in 1242. After being dragged behind a horse, he was hanged, disemboweled and dismembered into four pieces, which were displayed in four cities, from Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 16, f. 155v.

bow at once and said that he would join them. He shot three rounds and always slit the wand sticking in the ground.[26] Standing by the targets, the proud Sheriff of Nottingham swore a great oath: 'By Him who died on the Cross, this man is the best archer that I've ever seen. Tell me now, strong young man, what is your name? In what country were you born, and where do you live?' Little John replied, 'Sir, indeed of my mother, I was born in Holdernes in east Yorkshire, and men call me Reynold Greenleaf when I'm at home.'[27] 'Tell me, Reynold Greenleaf,' said the sheriff, 'would you like to dwell with me? I'll give you twenty marks as your fee every year.' 'I already have a master', replied Little John, 'and he is a courteous knight. It would be best if you got his permission to retain me.'

After the sheriff obtained the knight's permission to employ Little John, he was retained for a period of twelve months, and at once he was given a good strong horse. Now is Little John the sheriff's man. May God grant us to succeed! But Little John's thought was always to pay him his just desert. 'So help me God,' he thought to himself, 'and by my true fidelity I shall be the worst servant to him that he ever had!'[28]

It happened on a Wednesday when the sheriff was gone hunting and Little John was left lying in his bed. Shortly after noon, Little John, who had not eaten yet, said to the keeper of the hall, 'Good sir steward, I ask you, give me my dinner. It is a long time for Greenleaf to be fasting, so I ask you, sir steward, give me my dinner.' The steward replied, 'You will not eat or drink until my lord comes back to town.' 'Upon my vow to God,' said Little John, 'I would rather crack your crown.' The butler was uncourteous where he stood on the floor. He walked to the butlery and shut fast the door. Little John gave him such a tap that nearly broke his back in two. Though he lived a hundred years, he would never walk the same again. Little John kicked the door open with his foot and there he took a large helping of both ale and wine. 'Since you will not dine,' said Little John, 'I'll give you something to drink. Even if you live one hundred years, you won't soon forget Little John.' Little John ate, and he drank as long as he wanted to. In his kitchen the sheriff had a cook, a stout and bold man. 'By God,' said the cook, 'to ask like this to dine, you are a cursed servant to dwell in anyone's house.' He then gave Little John three good blows. 'By God,' said Little John, 'I like these strokes! I think you are a bold and hearty man, and before I pass from this place I'm going to put you more to the test.' Little John drew a good sword, and the cook took another in hand. They gave no thought to fleeing but staunchly held their ground. For an hour they fiercely fought each other, but neither could hurt the other. 'By God,' exclaimed Little John, 'you are one of the best swordsmen I have ever seen. If you could wield a bow as well, I'd take you to the greenwood where Robin Hood will pay you a fee of twenty marks a year and two changes of clothing.'[29] 'Put up your sword', said the cook, 'and we'll be friends.'

The cook then fetched sweetbreads, good bread and wine for Little John, and they ate and drank. When they had drunk a draft or two, they promised each other that they would join Robin Hood that same evening. They quickly went to the sheriff's treasure room, broke the steel locks and took away the silver vessels, dishes and drinking cups, and they didn't even forget the spoons. They also took £300 and more, and they went straight to Robin Hood in the ancient greenwood. 'God save you and Christ watch over you, my dear master,' said Little John. 'Welcome to you and to that fair yeoman who is with you. Tell me, Little John, what news do you bring from Nottingham,' replied Robin. 'The proud sheriff greets you well and sends you by me his cook, his silver vessels and his £303,' bragged Little John. 'By God and the Trinity,' exclaimed Robin, 'it was never by the sheriff's good will that all these possessions came to me!'

Soon after Little John devised a crafty trick. Running five miles into the forest, all his wishes came true. Upon meeting the proud sheriff, who was hunting with hounds and horn, he knelt down out of courtesy before him and said, 'My dear master, God and Christ save and watch over you!' The sheriff asked, 'Reynold Greenleaf, where have you been?' 'I've been in the forest', answered Little John, ' and I've seen the fairest sight I've ever seen. Over there I saw a right fair hart, green in colour, with a herd of one hundred and forty deer altogether. Their antlers of more than sixty are so sharp, master, that I was afraid to shoot at them for fear they would slay me.'[30] 'By God,' said the sheriff, 'I would gladly see that sight.' 'Hasten you thither, dear master, and go with me,' said Little John. While the sheriff rode on horseback, Little John ran nimbly by his side, and when they came upon Robin Hood, John said, 'Lo, sir, here is the master hart.'

The proud sheriff, a sorry man was he, stood stone still and uttered, 'A plague on you, Reynold Greenleaf, because you have betrayed me!' 'By God,' said Little John, 'master, you are at fault for I was deprived of my dinner when I was at your home.' The sheriff quickly sat down to supper, but when he recognized his white silver he lost his appetite. 'Be of good cheer and for courtesy, sheriff; and for Little John's sake,' said Robin, 'I grant you your life'. When they had finished eating, the day was almost gone, and Robin ordered Little John to take off the sheriff's shoes and hose, as well as his tunic and furred short jacket. Robin gave him a green mantle to wrap himself in and commanded his sturdy young men under the greenwood tree to dress themselves in the same liveries so that the sheriff might see them. Because the proud sheriff lay on the ground all night in his britches and shirt, it was no wonder that his sides hurt. 'Be of good cheer and charity, sheriff,' said Robin, 'for this is our custom under the greenwood tree.' 'This is a crueller custom than any hermit or friar has to bear,' cried the sheriff. 'I would give all the gold in England not to stay here longer!' 'You shall remain here with me for twelve months', replied Robin, 'and I'll teach you, proud sheriff, how to be an outlaw.'[31] 'Before I stay here another night, Robin, I beg you to strike off my head and I will forgive you,' said the sheriff. 'For holy charity, let me go, and I'll be the best friend you ever had.' 'You shall swear an oath to me on my shining sword', replied Robin, 'that you will never plot me harm on land or water. And if you find any of my men at day or night, you will, upon your word, help them as far as you can.' When the sheriff swore his oath he started off for home. He was as full of the greenwood as ever a fruit was of its stone!

Part 4

The sheriff, who dwelt now in Nottingham, was glad that he was gone from the greenwood, and Robin and his merry men returned at once to the forest. 'Do we have dinner now?' asked Little John. 'No,' said Robin, 'I'm afraid Our Lady is angry with me because she hasn't sent my money.'[32] 'Have no doubt, master,' replied Little John, 'the sun has not yet set, and I safely swear that the knight is true and trustworthy.' Robin then commanded Little John, 'No man stay with me, but take your bow in your hand, walk up under the Saylis to Watling Street with Much and William Scarlock, and look for some unknown guest. Whether he be a messenger or minstrel, if he is poor he shall have some of my goods.' Little John started forth, a little angered and annoyed,[33] and girded himself with a good sword under his green mantle. The three yeomen went up to the Saylis, and looking both east and west they saw no man coming. But as they looked towards Barnsdale down the highway, they saw two Benedictine monks dressed in black, each on a good saddle horse. Little John then said, 'I bet my life these monks have brought our money. Be of good cheer and make ready your yew bows, and look that your hearts be sure and steadfast, your bow strings trusty and true. The monks have fifty-two men and seven strong packhorses. No bishop in this land rides so royally, I believe. Brothers, although we are only three, we must bring them to dinner lest we fail our master. Bend your bows and make that crowd stop. The life and death of the foremost monk are contained in my hand.' 'Stop! churl monk,' yelled Little John, 'don't go any farther. By dear worthy God, if you move your death is in my hand. Evil luck thrive on your head, right under your hatband, for you have made our master angry over fasting too long.' 'Who is your master?' asked the monk. 'Robin Hood,' answered Little John. 'He is a downright thief,' asserted the monk. 'I've heard nothing but bad about him.' 'You lie!' then said Little John, 'you shall regret what you said. Robin is a yeoman of the forest, who has commanded you to dine with him.' Much, who was ready with an arrow, aimed at the monk's chest, so that he dismounted. Of the fifty-two young yeomen, not one stayed save a little page and a groom who led the packhorses with Little John.

Whether he liked it or not, the monk was brought to the door of Robin's hut to speak with Robin Hood. When he saw the monk, Robin lowered his hood, but the monk was not as courteous because he left his hood in place. 'By God,' said Little John, 'he is a churl.' 'No matter,' replied Robin, 'he doesn't know how to be

courteous. John, how many men had this monk?' 'Fifty-two when we met them, but most of them are gone,' answered John. 'Let's blow a horn', said Robin, 'so we may know our fellowship.' Immediately, seven score sturdy yeomen hurried to Robin's side, all of them dressed in striped scarlet mantles. They all came to Robin to know what he would say. The monk was made to wash and wipe his hands before sitting to dinner,[34] and Robin and Little John served him together. 'Eat with pleasure, monk,' said Robin. 'Thank you, sir,' the monk replied. 'When you are at home, where is your abbey? And who is your patron?' asked Robin. The monk answered, 'St Mary Abbey in York, though I am humble here.' 'What is your office?' Robin questioned. The monk replied, 'Sir, the chief steward.' 'So may I always prosper,' Robin added, 'you are most welcome. Fill our cups with the best wine, this monk shall drink to me.'

'All day long I have wondered why Our Lady has not sent me my money. I fear that she is angry with me,' Robin then said.[35] 'Have no doubt, master,' said Little John, 'you don't need to worry, I say, for the monk has brought it, I swear, because he is from the Virgin Mary's abbey.' Robin said, 'She was the guarantor of the money I lent the knight under the greenwood tree.' Turning to the monk, Robin said, 'And if you have brought that silver, I pray let me see it, and I shall help you in return if you have need of me.' With a miserable expression on his face, the monk swore a great oath and said, 'I have never heard of this matter before.' 'I swear to God, monk,' replied Robin, 'you are to blame because God and His Dame are righteous, and you cannot refuse because you said with your own tongue that you are Our Lady's servant and serve Her every day. And you are her messenger who will pay me my money. Therefore I thank you for coming today. Tell me the truth, what is in your coffers?' 'Sir,' answered the monk, 'so I may always prosper, twenty marks.' 'If there's no more than that', said Robin, 'I won't take a penny, and if you have need of more, sir, I'll lend it to you. But if I find more you will truly lose it all except for your travelling silver.[36] Little John, go forward and tell me the truth. If there's no more than twenty marks, I won't take a penny.'

Little John spread out the monk's mantle on the ground, as he had done before, and counted out more than £800 from his chest. Leaving the money on the ground, Little John ran to his master, and said, 'Sir, the monk is true enough, Our Lady has doubled your throw of the dice.' 'By God, monk,' said Robin, 'didn't I tell you that Our Lady is the truest woman that I ever found! By dear worthy God, searching throughout England I never found a better guarantor of my money. Let's fill our cups, drink a toast to the monk, and greet his gracious lady. And if she has need of Robin Hood, she will find a friend. And if she needs any more silver, you, monk, come again to me, and by this token she has sent to me she shall have three times as much.'

When Robin captured the monk, he was going to London to hold an important meeting in order to bring under foot the knight, Sir Richard at the Lee, who rode haughtily on his horse. Robin then asked, 'Monk, where are you going?' The monk replied, lying, 'Sir, I was going to our manors to deal with our crooked bailiffs, who have done much wrong.' 'Little John,' ordered Robin, 'come forward and listen to my tale. I don't know a better yeoman to search a monk's baggage.' 'Monk, tell us the truth,' asked Robin, 'how much money is that other horse carrying?' 'By Our Lady,' complained the monk, 'it is not courteous to ask a man to dinner and afterwards hold him!' 'It is our custom', said Robin, 'not to leave much behind.' Not wanting to stay any longer, the monk spurred his horse. Robin called after him, 'Before you ride away do you want another drink?' 'No, by God,' cried the monk, 'I regret that I came here for I could have dined more cheaply in Blyth or Doncaster!' 'Greet your abbot and prior for me', said Robin, 'and ask them to send me such a monk for dinner every day.'

Let's leave that monk in silence, and speak about the knight, Sir Richard, who came while it was still light on his appointed day to Robin Hood. He took himself straight to Barnsdale under the greenwood tree and found there Robin Hood and all his merry band. After the knight dismounted from his good horse, Robin courteously lowered his hood and knelt down. The knight exclaimed, 'God save you, Robin Hood and all this company.' And Robin replied, 'You are welcome, gentle knight, very welcome indeed.' Then Robin said to the knight so noble, 'What brings you to the greenwood? I pray, sir knight, tell me. Why have you been so long?' The knight replied, 'Because the abbot and the high justice would have had my land.' 'Tell me the truth,' asked Robin, 'do you have your land back again?'[37] 'Yes, by God,' replied the knight, 'and for that I thank God and you. But don't be offended that I have been so long for I came upon a wrestling match and there helped a poor yeoman who was being mistreated.' 'No, by God,' said Robin, 'Sir knight, I thank you for that. Any man who helps a good yeoman will be my friend.' Then the knight said, 'Here is the £400 that you lent me as well as twenty marks for your courtesy.'[38] 'No, by God,' replied Robin, 'you enjoy it forever because Our Lady, through her messenger the steward of St Mary's Abbey, has already sent me the money. And if I took the money twice, I would be ashamed. But truly, gentle knight, you are most welcome here.' When Robin told the knight his tale, he laughed and had good cheer, saying, 'By my word, your money is already here.' 'Use your money well, you generous knight', said Robin, 'and welcome to my trysting tree.'[39] But what are these bows and finely feathered arrows for?' asked Robin. 'By God,' then said the knight, 'they are a poor present for you.' 'Little John, come here,' said Robin, 'go to my money-box and bring me the £400 that the monk over-paid to me.' Robin said, 'Here, you gentle and true knight, have the £400. Go and buy yourself a horse with fine trappings and gild your spurs. And if you ever need any more money, come to Robin Hood, and, by my word, you shall never fail while I have any to give you. And use well the £400 that I lent you, and, if you will take my advice, don't dress so humbly.' Thus, good Robin helped the knight out of all his troubles. God, who sits in high heaven, grant us happiness!

Part 5

Now that the knight has taken his leave and gone on his way, Robin Hood and his merry men lived quietly for many days. Attend and listen, gentlemen, and hear what I am going to say about how the proud Sheriff of Nottingham announced a full fair contest. Upon a certain day all the best archers of the north should come together for a shooting, and he who shoots best of all will carry away the prize. Whoever shoots the farthest, fairest and lowest at a pair of fine butts[40] under the greenwood thicket will receive a right good arrow with a silver shaft and red-gold point and feathers. There is none like it in all of England. When Robin heard about the contest at his trysting tree, he said: 'You sturdy young men, prepare yourselves, I want to see that contest. Hurry, my merry young men, you will go with me, and I will test the sheriff's faithfulness to his oath.'

When they had readied their bows and finely feathered arrows, seven score sturdy young men stood by Robin's side. When they came to Nottingham, they found the target range fair and long. Many bold archers were shooting with strong bows. 'Only six of you will shoot with me,' said Robin, 'the others will protect my head. Stand by me with good bows ready in case I'm deceived by the sheriff.' Robin was the fourth outlaw to shoot his bow, and the proud sheriff was watching as he stood by the target. Robin shot three times and always split the wand sticking in the ground, and so did good Gilbert with the White Hand. Little John and Will Scarlock likewise were good archers, and Much and Reynold Greenleaf[41] were not much worse. When these good and fair archers all shot a bout, Robin Hood, in truth, was the best. The gold arrow was given to him as the best, and he courteously accepted the prize. As Robin was leaving for the greenwood, he heard the hue and cry and great horns sounding, and he said: 'Misery come to you! You will know evil for your treachery! You are truly evil! Woe to you, proud sheriff, pleasing your guest in this way! You promised me otherwise in yonder wild forest. If I had you in the greenwood at my trysting tree, you would leave me a better pledge than your word.'

Many an arrow were let loose there, many a tunic was rent, and many a side was hurt. The outlaws shot so fiercely that no man could drive them away, and the proud sheriff's men quickly fled. When Robin saw the ambush break out, he wished he was in the greenwood. Many an arrow was shot there among that company. Little John was so sorely hurt with an arrow in his knee that he couldn't run or ride. It was a great pity! To Robin then Little John said: 'Master, for the love of God who died on the Cross, and for the rewards of my service, if you ever loved me, don't let the proud sheriff find me alive. Take out your blood-stained sword, strike off my head, and give me deep and wide wounds.' 'No, I won't do that,' replied Robin, 'not for all the gold in England, though it lay in a pile.' 'God forbid', said Much, 'that you, Little John, should part from our company.' Much

placed John on his back and carried him a mile, pausing only to take another shot. A little within the forest, they came upon a fair castle, double ditched and walled. And there dwelt that noble knight, Sir Richard at the Lee, to whom Robin had loaned the £400 under the greenwood tree. The knight took in Robin and all his band, and said: 'You are welcome, Robin Hood, and I thank you for your comfort, courtesy and kindness under the greenwood tree. I love no man in all this world as much as I do you. I will give you sanctuary from the proud Sheriff of Nottingham.'

The knight then gave orders to his men: 'Shut the gates and draw up the bridge, and let no one in. Arm yourselves and get ready. To the battlements!' 'I swear by St Quentin,[42] Robin,' said Sir Richard, 'I promise to maintain you and your men for forty days.' At once the tables were laid out and the clothes were quickly spread, and Robin and his merry men went to their meal.

Part 6

Attend and listen, gentlemen, and harken to your song. Hear how the proud Sheriff of Nottingham and his armed men raised the countryside militia in order to besiege the walls of the knight's castle.

The haughty sheriff then loudly proclaimed, 'You traitor knight, you are protecting the king's enemies against the law.'[43] 'Sir, I openly acknowledge the deeds I have done,' replied Sir Richard, 'but I swear upon my lands that I am a true knight. Go forth, sirs, on your way, and do no more to me until you discover our king's will and learn what he will say about this.'

Thus the sheriff had his answer, and it was no lie. He went to London to tell our king. There he told him about Sir Richard and also about Robin Hood and his bold archers, who were so noble and good. 'Dear Lord,' said the sheriff to the king, 'Sir Richard has admitted that he has maintained the strong outlaws.' 'Be warned,' said the sheriff, 'he intends to be lord of the north and reckons you worth nothing.' 'I will come to Nottingham', said the king, 'within this fortnight, and I will capture Robin Hood and that knight. Do as I bid, go home now and organize the militia of good archers from the entire countryside.' The sheriff took his leave of the king and went on his way.

Upon a certain day, Robin Hood returned to the greenwood. When Little John was healed of the wound in his knee, he went straight to Robin Hood under the greenwood tree. Because Robin was free to roam in the forest under the green leaves, the proud Sheriff of Nottingham was greatly vexed. Although the sheriff waited for Robin both by day and by night, he missed him and could not take his prey. He also stalked the noble knight, Sir Richard at the Lee, and one day, while the knight was hawking by the riverside, he was captured by heavily armed men and led bound hand and foot to Nottingham. Swearing a great oath, 'By Christ who died on the Cross,' the sheriff wished he'd captured Robin Hood instead.

When the knight's wife, a fair and noble lady, heard this, she mounted her saddle horse and rode to the greenwood. When she came into the forest under the greenwood tree, she found Robin Hood and his fair band there. 'God save you and your company,' said the lady, 'for the sake of our dear Virgin, I beg you to grant me a boon. Don't let my wedded lord be shamefully slain! Because of his love of you, he has been fast bound and taken to Nottingham.' Good Robin said at once to the noble lady, 'Who has taken your lord?' She then said, 'The proud Sheriff of Nottingham has taken him. In truth, he is not yet 3 miles from here.'

Robin jumped up as if he were mad, and said, 'Hurry you my merry men, and, by Christ who died on the Cross, if anyone refuse to serve he shall never live with me in the greenwood.' Immediately seven score archers with their bows scrambled over the hedges and ditches. 'I vow to God,' said Robin, 'if I find the sheriff and capture him, I will take revenge.'

And when they arrived in Nottingham, they walked through the streets and soon met up with the proud sheriff. 'Wait, you proud sheriff!' Robin said, 'wait, and speak to me. I want to hear what the king said. By dear worthy God, I haven't gone this fast on foot in the last seven years and, by God, it's not for your good!' All at once Robin shot an arrow from his bow and hit the proud sheriff so that he fell still on the ground. And before he could get up and stand on his feet, Robin struck off his head with his bright sword. 'Lie there, proud sheriff,' Robin said, 'badly may you end! No man could trust you while you were alive.' Robin's men drew out their sharp swords, attacked the sheriff's men, and chased them out without delay. Robin rushed to Sir Richard, cut his bonds in two, handed him a bow, and bade him stand and fight. 'Leave your horse behind', said Robin to the knight, 'and run with me through mire, moss and fen to the greenwood, until I've gotten the pardon of Edward, our handsome king.'[44]

Part 7

King Edward and his knights came to Nottingham in great force to capture Sir Richard and, if he might, Robin Hood. He asked the men of that country the whereabouts of the outlaw and the bold knight. When they told him what had happened, the king understood the situation, and he seized all the knight's lands. King Edward travelled through the whole of Lancashire until he came to Plompton Park,[45] where he found many of his deer missing. The king was used to seeing many herds there, but now he could scarcely find one deer with decent horns.[46] Enraged, the king swore by the Trinity, and said, 'I wish I had Robin Hood within my eyesight. And he who decapitates Sir Richard and brings his head to me shall have the knight's land. I will give it to him with my charter and seal it with my hand to have and to hold for ever more.'

Then spoke a fair old knight, who was true in his faith, 'O, my lord king, let me speak a word – there is no man in this country who can have the knight's lands while Robin Hood still rides with a bow in his hands. Robin won't lose his head, the "best ball in the hood",[47] by surrendering it to any man.' Our handsome King Edward lived in Nottingham half a year and more, but he didn't hear a word about Robin Hood or what part of the country he was in. Meantime, good Robin, travelling through hills and dales, continued to kill and enjoy the king's deer at will.

One day a proud forester, who was standing at the king's side, said, 'If you want to see good Robin, you must do what I say. Take five of your best knights, who are under your command, and walk down to yonder abbey and dress yourselves in monks' habits. I will be your guide and lead you, and before you reach Nottingham I wager my head that you will meet good Robin, if he is still alive, and see him with your own eyes.' After the king and the five knights were quickly clothed in monk's garments, they hastened thither. Our king, who was very tall, wore a broad hat on his head like an abbot. To tell you the truth, he also wore thick boots as he rode singing to the greenwood on the way to Nottingham. His 'convent of monks', all dressed in grey, his baggage horse, and his packhorses followed behind until they arrived in the greenwood about a mile in the forest. All of a sudden, they met good Robin and many bold archers standing in the middle of the road.[48] [See plate 20.]

Grabbing the reins of the king's horse, Robin said, 'Sir abbot, by your leave, you must stay here a little while. As yeomen of this forest, under these greenwood trees, we live on our king's deer for we have no other means. But you have churches, rents from your properties, and plenty of gold. For the sake of charity, give us some of your earnings.' Then soon spoke Edward, our handsome king, 'I have brought with me no more than £40 to the greenwood. For the last fortnight I've been staying with the king in Nottingham, and I've spent a great deal of money on the great lords there. And all I have left is £40, not a penny more, but if I had £100 I'd promise it to you.' Robin took the £40 and divided it into two parts – half he gave to his merry men and bade them to be merry. The other half Robin returned to the king, and courteously said, 'Sir, you can have this for your expenses. We shall meet another day.'[49] 'Thank you,' replied the king, 'but King Edward greets you and sends you his seal, bidding you to come to Nottingham to share both food and meat with him.' The king then took out his broad targe[50] and showed it to Robin, who knowing his courtesy, knelt down at once. Robin exclaimed, 'I love no man in all the world as much as I do my king. My lord's seal is most welcome here and, monk, so is your news. For the love of my king, sir abbot, you will dine with me today under my trysting tree.'

Robin led our handsome king by the hand to the place where many deer had been slain and quickly prepared. Robin blew loudly on a large horn, and seven score sturdy young men came running in a row and knelt before him. Swearing by St Augustine, the king said to himself, 'Here is an amazing sight! By God's sacrifice, his men are more obedient than mine.' Their dinner was quickly

prepared and they went to eat. Both Robin and Little John served our king with all their skill. Before our king was set fat venison, good white bread, good red wine and also fine brown ale.

Robin said, 'Abbot, for charity, make good cheer and bless you for this news. You shall see what kind of life we lead, before you go away, so you can tell the king when you meet him.' Whereupon they jumped up and prepared their bows. Our king was so frightened because he thought he would be killed. As targets they set up two sticks fifty paces apart, but the king thought that they were too distant. And on both targets they placed a rose garland.[51] Robin said, 'Anyone who misses the rose garland shall forfeit his gear, no matter how fine, and give it to his master. As I drink ale or wine, I will spare no man, who will also receive a blow on his head.' It soon fell to Robin to strike them sorely. Twice Robin himself shot a round and he always split the stick, and so did Gilbert Whitehand.[52] But when Little John and good Scarlock missed the garland, Robin struck them sorely. Taking his final shot, Robin missed the target by more than three fingers' width.

Then spoke good Gilbert, 'Master, you have lost your gear. Stand and take your punishment.' Robin replied, 'If it may not be otherwise, sir abbot, I deliver my arrow to you. I pray you, sir, serve me the blow.' 'Robin, by your permission,' the abbot said, 'my religious order does not permit me to strike a good yeoman for fear I will hurt him.' 'Strike on boldly,' ordered Robin, 'I give you full permission.' With that word, the king, folding up his sleeve, gave Robin such a blow that he fell to the ground. 'By God!' said Robin, 'you are a stalwart friar! Your arms are so strong I warrant you can also shoot well.'

When the king came close to Robin, he gazed intently at our handsome king, as did Sir Richard at the Lee, and they both knelt down. When the wild outlaws saw them kneel, they did the same. 'My lord, the King of England,' exclaimed Robin, 'now I recognize you!'[53] 'Thanks, Robin,' said the king, 'for your goodness and your grace at your trysting tree for my men and me.' 'Yes, and may God save me,' cried Robin, 'I beg your mercy, my lord the king, for me and my men.' 'Yes, for the sake of God,' then said our king, 'I agree to it if you and your band will leave the greenwood and come home, sir, to my court and there dwell with me.' 'I vow to God', said Robin, 'that it shall be so. I'll come to your court to serve you, and I'll bring my seven score and three men with me. But if I don't like serving you, I'll return to the greenwood to shoot at the brown deer, as I'm used to doing.'

Part 8

'Do you have any green cloth', asked the king, 'that you'll sell to me now?' 'Yes, by God,' said Robin, '33 yards.' 'Robin,' said our king, 'I pray you now will sell me some of that cloth for me and my company.' 'Yes, by God,' answered Robin, 'or else I were a fool. You will clothe me, I believe, for Christmas.'[54] Casting off his monk's habit, the king put on the green garment, and, indeed, all the knights were soon wearing the hoods. When they were all dressed in Lincoln green,[55] they cast away their grey habits. To everyone there the king said, 'Now we shall go to Nottingham.'

Dressed as outlaws, they went toward Nottingham town shooting as they went. As our king and Robin rode together along the way,[56] they played the shooting game 'pluck buffet', and the king, who missed many targets, received many knocks from Robin Hood that day. Good Robin wasn't sparing in his payment of buffets! 'So help me God,' said the king, 'your game is not hard to learn. Though I practised shooting for a year, I couldn't beat you.' [See plate 21.]

As they rode into Nottingham, all the people stood and stared, and saw nothing but green mantles that covered the field. They said to each other, 'I fear our king has been slain. Robin Hood has come into town and he has left no one alive.' Both yeomen and boys began to flee, and old women, who could hardly walk, hopped away on their crutches. The king laughed out loud and gave orders to his people. When they saw our handsome king, they were very pleased indeed. They ate, drank and had a merry time singing high notes.

Then our handsome king spoke to Sir Richard at the Lee and gave him back his land. Robin thanked King Edward and knelt down. Robin lived in the king's court for fifteen months, and during that time he spent £100 in addition to his men's payments. Every where he went, Robin paid out even more for knights and squires in order to maintain his renown. By the end of the year, all those he had retained had gone except for Little John and good Will Scarlock. One day Robin saw men shooting their bows and arrows, and said, 'Alas, my wealth is gone![57] Sometime ago I was a good archer, hardy and strong, and was reckoned the best archer in merry England. Alas, if I live any longer with the king, my sorrow will slay me!' Robin went forth to the king, and said, 'My lord the King of England, grant me my request. I built a fair chapel in Barnsdale, dedicated to Mary Magdalene,[58] and I want to go there for seven days. I will neither eat or drink nor sleep a wink. As a pilgrim, I have been called to go there barefoot and dressed in sackcloth.' 'If it must be so,' answered the king, 'it cannot be otherwise. I give you leave for seven days, but no longer.' 'Thank you, lord,' then said Robin, settling himself on his knee.

Robin took his leave courteously and then he went to the greenwood. When he arrived in the forest on a merry morning, he heard the delicate notes of the birds merrily singing. 'It was long ago when I was last here,' said Robin, 'it pleases me to shoot at the brown deer.' Robin killed a large hart, and then blew his horn. Recognizing the sound, all the outlaws of the forest gathered together, and seven score sturdy young men hastened to Robin's side. Lowering their hoods, they knelt before him. 'Welcome our master', they said, 'under this greenwood tree.'

Robin lived in the greenwood for twenty-two years. For fear of King Edward, he didn't return to court. Yet he was tricked by a wicked woman, the prioress of

Kirkley Abbey,[59] who was related to him. Because of her love of a knight, Sir Roger of Donkesly, who was her favourite, may they suffer evil! Together they plotted how they might kill Robin Hood. Then spoke good Robin, 'Tomorrow I must go to Kirkley Abbey to have my blood let.' Sir Roger of Doncaster[60] lay with the prioress, and they betrayed good Robin Hood through their foul play.

Christ, who died on the Cross, have mercy on his soul because he was a good outlaw who did poor men much good!

9

ADAM BELL, CLIM OF THE CLOUGH AN WILLIAM OF CLOUDESLEY

Thomas Hahn

INTRODUCTION

As a lively, self-contained and substantive tale of outlawry, *Adam Bell, Clim of Clough and William of Cloudesley* is the only work that rivals stories of Robin Ho in popularity and antiquity. No outlaw ballad, except the pivotal *A Gest of Ro Hode*, was printed earlier than *Adam Bell*; the earliest fragments of the ball survive from an edition of 153[illegible], and the poem was then reprinted another ha dozen times or more within the next seventy-five years. *Adam Bell* is only or third as long as *A Gest of Robin Hode*, but it is twice the length of the earlie unprinted Robin Hood ballads (*Robin Hood and the Monk*, *Robin Hood and the Pott* and six times the length of the many seventeenth-century broadside ballads th celebrate the deeds of Robin Hood. Though the exploits of Adam, Clim a William never achieved inclusion in the 'garlands' (or cheap collections) th lionized Robin Hood into the nineteenth century, the outlaws were certainly w known to late medieval and early modern audiences: in 1432 a Wiltshi Parliament roll lists 'Adam Belle', 'Clim O'Cluw' and 'William Cloudes (alongside Robin Hood and other merry men) as local members, suggesting th the outlaws' notoriety had endowed their names with sufficient familiarity to playful or defiant aliases in official contexts.[1]

The narrative was reprinted, presumably in its entirety, perhaps twice, in th 1540s, and again in 1557–8, 1582, 1586, 1594 and several more times in the fi decade of the seventeenth century. Its remarkable popularity and commerci success inspired an anaemic sequel, added in 1586 and to most later editions; this, William's oldest son (also here named William) grows up and, in the proce of stealing off with his love Cisley, kills her former suitor and three rangers, ar so becomes an outlaw.[2] 'Old William' pleads to the king for mercy; when this denied, he and his old associates, Adam and Clim, join young William and Cisl and they resist the pursuit of fifty thousand of the king's men. When the kir reverses policy and offers to take the outlaws into his service, Adam declare 'Neare [never] had His Grace subjects more true, And sturdier than we'; th outlaws become courtiers, and the queen makes Cisley a lady, repeating to som

4 In *Egils saga-Grímssonar*, Arnviður, earl of Vermaland (Värmland in Sweden), has among his retainers two brothers called Úlfur, both of whom Egil kills when they try to ambush him in the Forest of Eiðaskógur.

5 In *Ketils saga hængs*, Ketill receives his appellative or nickname by killing an outlaw called Hængur. But the name is derived from hængr (pot-hook), and a jack salmon is called 'hængur' because of the shape of its lower jaw (Anthony Faulkes (ed.), *Two Icelandic Stories. Hreiðars þáttr. Orms þáttr* [Viking Society for Northern Research, Text Series 4, London, n.d.], p. 94).

6 Hamar is in the southern part of modern Hedmark on the east shore of Lake Mjøsa.

7 Pronounced 'own' as in 'town'.

8 In *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*, and *Orms þáttr Stórólfssonar*, Grettir and Ormur are both problem children like Án, although not 'male Cinderellas'. This is in contrast to the youthful sloth of Ketill 'the Jack-Salmon', Ketill will later kill the loutish giant Sæfari who will taunt him with being a *kolbítur* (cinder-cat). The common motif of the unpromising hero who is first lazy (Inger M. Boberg, *Motif-Index of Early Icelandic Literature* [Bibliotheca Arnamagnæana 27, Copenhagen, 1966], Motif L 114.1), and a hearthdweller or 'male Cinderella', i.e. a Kolbítur (Boberg, *Motif-Index*, Motif L131), is frequently encountered in all genres of saga writing (see the list of occurrences in Boberg, *Motif-Index*, p. 189).

9 This episode is also found in *Ketils saga hængs*. Helga Reuschel, *Untersuchungen über Stoff und Stil der Fornaldarsaga* (Bausteine zur Volkskunde und Religions-wissenschaft 7, Bühl-Baden, 1933) p. 108, claims that this detail has been taken from *Áns saga* and inserted into *Ketils saga* in order to strengthen the relationship between the two sagas. But it might just as easily be the other way around.

10 The narrative detail of a young hero who has strained relations with his father, but is much beloved by his mother is also attributed to Grettir Ásmundarson.

11 Án's name is the basis for a series of puns in the text which have not been literally translated.

12 Reuschel, *Untersuchungen*, p. 58, points out that this phrase seems to have been taken from *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, chapter 57, where Egill is made an outlaw throughout all of Norway. As a *fylkiskonungr* (regional king) Ingjaldur does not have the authority to declare anyone an outlaw outside his own district.

13 A *kerling* is a metaphor for woman.

14 This is an allusion to Drífa, one of the meanings of whose name is 'snowfall'. Snowfall in calm weather (logn) is called 'logndrífa' and in the verse the second element of this word is omitted, but the meaning of the line is parallel to line four, something like: 'From where are you coming, Drífa?'

15 The footpad ('stígamaður') is not exactly an outlaw, but someone who has taken himself to the margins of society. In *Auðunar saga Vestfirzka*, Hallfreður Óttarson kills the *stigamaður*, Önundur, in an encounter which is likely to have been the model for the description of the altercation between Án and Garan. In *Valdasdæla saga*, Þorsteinn the son of Ketill 'Flat-Foot' and grandson of Án, kills the *stigamaður* Jökull Ingimundarson.

16 The 'hired killer' ('flugumaður') in thirteenth-century Iceland was an 'assassin-outlaw', someone who had been outlawed but who then sought out the protection of a powerful chieftain in return for carrying out assassination raids against the chieftain's enemies (Amory, 'Medieval Icelandic Outlaw' pp. 207–12).

17 The region of Upplönd comprises modern Oppland and Hedmark.

18 Two more puns which have only been approximately translated.

8. *A GEST OF ROBYN HODE*

Introduction

1 The standard source for the Robin Hood ballads is still volume three of Francis Child's *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (New York, The Folklore Press, 1957; repr., New York, Dover, 1965). For newly edited versions of twenty-four of the ballads, see Knight and Ohlgren (eds), *Robin Hood and Other Outlaw Tales*.

2 For more detailed treatments of these printed texts, see Child III. 39; Dobson and Taylor, *Rymes of Robin Hood*, pp. 71–4.

3 D.C. Fowler, *A Literary History of the Popular Ballad* (Durham, Duke University Press, 1968), p. 18. See also above, pp. 191–3.

4 The argument for a fifteenth-century copy text rests on the presence of some textual deficiencies and misprints in the extant printed versions; for a discussion, see Child, *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, p. 40.

5 See Thomas H. Ohlgren, 'Edwardus redivivus in *A Gest of Robyn Hode*', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, forthcoming.

6 It is not possible to ascertain the manipulation of the copy text by the sixteenth-century compositor, but we can assume that the compositor exercised some freedom in changing spelling and word order as well as in adding or omitting material.

7 Rodney H. Hilton, 'The Origins of Robin Hood', pp. 221–35 in *Peasants, Knights and Heretics: Studies in Medieval English Social History* (Cambridge University Press, 1976). Maurice Keen, in *The Outlaws of Medieval Legend*, initially agreed with Hilton on the audience of the Robin Hood poems, but he recanted his argument in the introduction (pp. xiii–xxi) to the revised paperback edition published by Routledge in 1987.

8 J.C. Holt, *Robin Hood*, pp. 109–58.

9 Dobson and Taylor, *Rymes of Robyn Hood*, p. 35.

10 A.R. Myers (ed.), *English Historical Documents 1327–1485* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 929.

11 Mildred Campbell, *The English Yeoman in the Tudor and Early Stuart Age* (New York, Augustus M. Kelley, 1968), p. 39.

12 All citations to Chaucer are from *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston, Houghton Mifflin), 1987.

13 See Sylvia L. Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London 1300–1500* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1948), pp. 76–80.

14 Martin Seliger, *Ideology and Politics* (London, 1976), p. 11.

15 Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York, Vintage Books, 1996), p. 140.

16 Michael Nerlich, *Ideology of Adventure: Studies in Modern Consciousness 1100–1750*, tr. Ruth Crowley, (2 vols, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1987), vol. 1, pp. 60–9.

17 For a representative sample of guild charters and ordinances, see William Herbert, *The History of the Twelve Great Livery Companies of London* (2 vols, London, published by the author, 1836–7; repr., New York, Augustus M. Kelley, 1968). See the notes for specific examples.

Translation

1 The status terms 'gentlemen' and 'yeomen' were used interchangeably in the early fifteenth century. 'Yeomen' denotes a broad social rank below knights and squires, including a small landowning farmer, an attendant, servant or lesser official in a royal or noble household, and even a tradesman, artificer, merchant and citizen (Middle English *yoman*, perhaps contraction of *yongman*).

2 Although the term 'outlaw' was generally applied to anyone who had committed a serious crime, such as robbery or murder, it had a more restricted legal meaning as well – those felons who refused to appear in court once summoned. The word is English in origin (Old English *utlaga*, from Old Norse *útlagi*).

3 Barnsdale has been identified as a tract of land in the West Riding of Yorkshire. As J.C. Holt notes, however, there was no forest or chase and he speculates that the three major locations of the legend – Barnsdale, Sherwood Forest and Nottingham – are all confused. The *Gest* clearly links Barnsdale with named places in the West Riding of Yorkshire. It does not mention Sherwood Forest in Nottinghamshire, but does set part of the story in Nottingham. See also note 9.

4 By refusing to eat until some unusual event occurs, Robin Hood is imitating the behaviour of royalty. In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, for instance, King Arthur will not eat until he has been told of some adventurous thing, an unusual tale or some major marvel.

5 Reaching its height in Western Europe in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the Marian cult is one of the major features of Roman Catholicism. Robin's devotion to the Virgin underlies one of the major episodes in the poem – the loan of £400 to Sir Richard at the Lee and its 'miraculous' repayment by a monk of St Mary's Abbey.

6 Robin Hood displays the chivalric ideal of protecting women, an obligation previously the preserve of knighthood: 'Wolde he never do compani harme/ That any woman was in'. In Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur* (Book III, Chapter XV), King Arthur decrees 'to do ladies, damosels, and gentlewomen succour, upon pain of death'.

7 In the early ballads Robin's outlaw activities are directed primarily at corrupt civil and ecclesiastical officials at the shire level. While some of his crimes, such as deer poaching, are capital offences, he is a loyal subject of the king.

8 The 'Saylis' and 'Watling Street' (actually Ermine Street) are located in Barnsdale, in the West Riding of Yorkshire.

9 The knight is later identified as Sir Richard at the Lee. He comes from 'Verysdale', which is probably the hamlet of Lee in Wyresdale in Lancashire.

10 Blyth and Doncaster are located on the main road south of the Barnsdale region.

11 Hand washing before a meal was a custom of civilized behaviour, reflecting yet again the influence of courtly romances on the *Gest*.

12 Robin bases his decision to rob his victims on how truthful they are. When victims are stopped on the road and waylaid into the forest, they are asked to answer truthfully how much money they are carrying. If they tell the truth – as does Sir Richard – they are allowed to keep their money, but if they lie – as the high cellarer of St Mary's Abbey later does – then they are robbed. This game of truth or consequences is also seen in *Eustache the Monk* and in *Fouke fitz Waryn*.

13 In a Parliamentary writ, dated 1278, Edward I ordered all sheriffs in England 'to distrain [compel] without delay all those of your bailiwick who have lands worth twenty pounds a year, or one whole knight's fee worth twenty pounds a year, and hold of us in chief and ought to be knights but are not, to receive from us before Christmas or on that feast the arms of a knight' (Rothwell, *English Historical Documents* III, 413).

14 Because his son killed a knight and his squire in a joust, Sir Richard was forced to borrow £400 from the Abbot of St Mary's in York in order to obtain a pardon for his son.

15 When Robin asks for a guarantor for the loan of £400, the knight replies that he has none other than 'our dere Lady', who, because of his devotion to the Virgin, Robin readily accepts. The loan to Sir Richard and its miraculous repayment is one of the central episodes in the poem.

16 As the poem makes clear, the original colour of the outlaws' liveries is scarlet, not green. Robin is playing the role of a merchant when he orders Little John to measure out 3 yards of cloth for Sir Richard's new livery. Little John proceeds to measure the cloth with his bow stave, which is some 67 inches in length instead of the standard measure of a yard. Concerned about this display of excess and temper, Much the Miller's son accuses Little John of being a Devil's draper. There are other references to mercantile activities in the poem, which may suggest that the intended audience consisted of members of the urban gilds, such as the Drapers' Company and the Merchant Taylors.

17 York is located about 30 miles north of Barnsdale.

18 The Prior of St Mary's Abbey apparently has privileged information concerning the whereabouts of Sir Richard when he says he will be unable to repay the loan on time because he is 'ferre beyonde the see'. Previous scholars have assumed that he has been on a crusade or pilgrimage, but the mention of 'symple weeds' need not indicate a religious journey. Indeed, as I have argued elsewhere, the evidence suggests that Sir Richard was on a military campaign in France at the beginning of the Hundred Years War.

19 Probably St Richard of Chichester (Richard de Wych, 1197–1253).

20 Another reference to Sir Richard's recent return from abroad.

21 The predatory abbot has hired or retained the justice, or professional lawyer, to help him bankrupt the knight. The phrase *cloth and fee* refers to the payment of money and clothing for legal services.

22 Verysdale. See note 9.

23 Sir Richard's ability to raise and equip one hundred archers suggests that he served as a recruiting agent or purveyor for the crown, which was a lucrative business in times of war. This would explain how he was able to raise the £400 in order to repay the loan to Robin Hood.

24 As the poem suggests, wrestling was considered a yeoman sport. Chaucer's Miller 'at wrastlynge he wolde have alwey the ram'.

25 The usual prize for a wrestling match was a ram: in this contest, however, the victor wins a bull, a saddled horse, a pair of gloves, a gold ring and a cask of wine.

26 The frequent wars in Scotland and France in the fourteenth century necessitated that the populace practise archery on a regular basis. As a result, archery competitions were held on holidays and feast days throughout the country by royal order of Edward III. The sheriff is using the shooting match to identify the local talent and to recruit the best archers for eventual military service. Shooting at 'wands' or sticks stuck in the ground was the hardest challenge for any archer in the ballads; Little John split the stick each time.

27 When Little John wins the archery contest, the sheriff offers to retain his services for an annual fee. Since he has already been retained by Sir Richard, he is not permitted to change masters until

the sheriff receives the knight's permission. Because Little John has been outlawed, he uses the alias Reynold Greenleaf. In part 5 the poet treats Reynold as a separate character, perhaps forgetting that he previously used it as Little John's alias. See note 41.

28 When Little John says that he will be the worst servant the sheriff has ever seen, he is playing the role of the 'bad servant', a role he also plays when he recklessly miss measures the cloth at the end of part 1.

29 By offering the cook an annual fee and two changes of livery, Little John is retaining the services of the cook.

30 The green hart, with his herd of seven score deer, is an ironic reference to Robin Hood, the *mayster-herte* and his men. Their sharp antlers, of course, are their arrows.

31 The sheriff has become Robin's 'apprentice', which continues the mercantile theme.

32 Because the knight stopped to help the yeoman at the wrestling match, he is late for his appointment with Robin Hood, and Robin is impatiently waiting to be repaid the money he loaned to the knight. Robin's impatience, bordering on obsession, is further evidence of the mercantile theme.

33 This is another example of the strife between Little John and Robin Hood. Whenever Robin gives John a direct order, such as counting out the £400 for Sir Richard or measuring the cloth, John loses his temper. Their discord may be explained by the fact that Robin is the 'master', while John is the 'fellow' or, to continue the mercantile theme, the 'apprentice'.

34 Another reference to the custom of hand washing, see note 11.

35 Again Robin is preoccupied with being repaid the money loaned to the knight.

36 This is another example of the game of truth or consequences, and this time the monk lies that he has only twenty marks.

37 Robin's questions seem to be pointless because he surely knows that the knight recovered his land from the abbot of St Mary's.

38 In addition to repaying the loan of £400, Sir Richard offers a gift of twenty marks 'for your courtesy'. Because it was illegal to charge interest, 'gifts' were a way to avoid the charge of usury.

39 The 'trysting' tree is a tree in the forest, such as the Major Oak in Sherwood, selected by the outlaws as their place of rendezvous. The term originally designated a hunting station.

40 Butts are mounds (usually artificial) marking the limits of a shooting range.

41 When the sheriff retained Little John after the archery contest, John adopts the alias of Reynold Greenleaf. Here, however, Reynold appears as a separate character and a member of the outlaw band. This inconsistency may be the result of the fifteenth-century author's attempt to compile materials from different sources. See also note 27.

42 Saint Quentin or Quintinus was a Roman who went to Gaul as a missionary with St Lucian of Beauvais. He was so successful in preaching that he was arrested, imprisoned and tortured by prefect Rictiovarus, and later beheaded at Veromanduorum, now Saint-Quentin, a town in northern France. It seems odd that Sir Richard swears an oath on a minor French martyr and saint. The only reasonable explanation is that while abroad he was stationed in or near the French town, which was in fact the site of the first encounter between King Edward III and King Philip VI in September 1339.

43 When Sir Richard offers sanctuary to Robin Hood, he is of course breaking the law by maintaining the outlaws. The crime of maintenance involves giving favour and support to felons.

44 Three Edwards reigned in succession from 1272 to 1377: Edward I, 1272–1307; Edward II, 1307–27; Edward III, 1327–77. For evidence that the king is Edward III, see the introduction.

45 Helen Phillips (1988, p. 8) confirms Child's identification (III, pp. 54–5) of Plompton Park as a royal hunting preserve in Inglewood Forest in Cumberland, which is also the setting of *Adam Bell*.

46 The *Gest* is largely silent about the harsh forest laws of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that protected 'vert' and 'venison'. Trespasses on 'vert', mainly cutting wood for fuel, are not mentioned at all. Offences against 'venison' are however numerous, but King Edward, who goes to investigate the disappearance of his deer, ends up pardoning Robin Hood. See also Knight and Ohlgren, *Robin Hood and Other Outlaw Tales*, pp. 164–5.

47 The phrase, 'the best ball in the hood', refers to the head, and may reflect games in which the ball was originally a human head.

48 The episode of King Edward meeting Robin Hood in the forest represents the story-type known as the 'King and the Subject', in which a subject of lower rank meets the king, usually in disguise and unrecognized, and after talking, drinking and eating, the king finally reveals himself and the subject is rewarded or pardoned.

49 Another instance of the 'game' of truth or consequences. See note 12.

50 A 'targe' is the king's private or privy seal.

51 The rose garland is a wreath of flowers used as the target.

52 Gilbert Whitehand is mentioned for the first time at the beginning of part 5.

53 Who can forget the famous recognition scene in the 1938 film, *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, when Errol Flynn recognizes King Richard the Lion Heart (played by Ian Hunter)?

54 Robin again plays the role of cloth merchant, selling 33 yards of green cloth to the king.

55 The outlaws' liveries are now described as Lincoln green in colour, whereas they were scarlet in colour at the beginning of the poem. This inconsistency can be explained by the fact that the poem represents a compilation of pre-existing materials, now mainly lost.

56 The procession on horseback from Sherwood to Nottingham resembles the gild 'ridings' in which gild members, dressed in their liveries, welcomed and escorted visiting dignitaries, including the king, into London. While riding on horseback, Robin and King Edward play another shooting game, called 'pluck buffet', in which the person missing the designated target receives a 'pluck' or blow.

57 After living at court for fifteen months, Robin exhausts all of his financial resources through excessive generosity, which borders on prodigality. Consequently, all of Robin's retainers, whom he was maintaining, leave except for Little John and Will Scarlock. Robin's wasteful extravagance becomes the chief cause of his outlawry in the later tradition of Richard Grafton's *Chronicle at Large* (1569), Anthony Munday's *The Downfall of Robert, Earle of Huntington* (1598), and Martin Parker's *A True Tale of Robin Hood* (1632).

58 The choice of this name can hardly be an accident – Mary Magdalene is a type of the converted sinner. She is popularly associated with the repentant and reformed prostitute who washed Christ's feet in Luke 7:36–50 and with the woman who witnessed Christ's resurrection.

59 The location of the nunnery has been identified with Kirklee or Kirkley abbey, 4 miles north of Huddersfield, Yorkshire.

60 Sir Roger of Doncaster (the earlier 'Donkesly' is probably a scribal error) is also called Red Roger in the mid-seventeenth-century ballad, *The Death of Robin Hood*. Although its printed version is late in

date, it preserves an earlier ballad dating from the mid-fifteenth century. It offers some details not included in the cryptic six verses in the *Gest*: after Robin's cousin, the prioress, drains his blood with surgical knives, Robin weakly blows his horn three times, summoning Little John. Robin then attempts to climb out of the window, but is stabbed through the side by Red Roger. Mortally wounded, Robin kills Red Roger. Robin then instructs Little John to bury him where his last arrow hits the ground.

9. *ADAM BELL, CLIM OF THE CLOUGH AND WILLIAM OF CLOUDESLEY*

Introduction

1 For an account of the early appearances of the name 'Robin Hood', and their possible resonances, see Stephen Knight, *Robin Hood*, pp. 22–36.

2 Francis James Child (III, pp. 34–9) edits *The Second Part of Adam Bell* as an Appendix to *Adam Bell*. Child declares the *Second Part* 'a pure manufacture, with no root in tradition, and . . . an absurd extravaganza besides'. Despite its early date and broad familiarity, Child disdains the ballad's lack of 'authenticity'. It is not included in the now definitive collection of earlier outlaw materials, Knight and Ohlgren, *Robin Hood and Other Outlaw Tales*.

3 For an edition with commentary of *Robin Hood's Birth*, see Knight and Ohlgren, *Robin Hood and Other Outlaw Tales*, pp. 527–40.

4 For an edition with commentary of *Robin Hood and the Monk*, see Knight and Ohlgren, *Robin Hood and Other Outlaw Tales*, pp. 31–56. This is one of only two Robin Hood ballads to survive in manuscript. Its early date (1490 or after) and its close similarity to *Adam Bell* in plot, suggest that the fundamental pattern for the outlaw story became fully established in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.

5 In contrast, Robin Hood's desire to go to Nottingham in *Robin Hood and the Monk* stems from his devotion to the Virgin Mary as well as from a falling out with Little John.

6 For particularized accounts of the activities of medieval outlaw gangs – including what seems imitation of legendary outlaw practice and recruitment to royal service – see J.G. Bellamy, 'The Coterel Gang: an Anatomy of a Band of Fourteenth-century Criminals', *English Historical Review* 79 (1964), pp. 698–717 and E.L.G. Stones, 'The Folvilles of Ashby-Folville, Leicestershire, and their Associates in Crime, 1326–1347', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th series, 7 (1957), 117–36.

7 For the comments of More, together with other early reactions to outlaw material, see the Appendix of historical allusions in Knight, *Robin Hood*.

Translation

The original reads 'Englysshe-wood', which most scholars identify as Inglewood Forest in Cumberland. According to Francis Child, it was 16 miles in length, stretching from Carlisle to Penrith (III, pp. 21–2). Inglewood Forest was also identified as one of the haunts of Robin Hood in Andrew of Wyntoun's *Orygynale Chronicle* (*c.* 1420). See Knight and Ohlgren, *Robin Hood and Other Outlaw Tales*, p. 24. Inglewood Forest is also the setting for a large group of Gawain romances; see *Sir Gawain: Eleven Romances and Tales*, ed. Thomas Hahn, Kalamazoo, Michigan, Medieval Institute Publications, 1995.

2 Carlisle is the principal town of Cumberland. It is located on the border between England and Scotland, 302 miles (north-north-west) from London, and owing to its location it was the site of many border sieges and battles. As *Adam Bell* makes clear, it is a walled city with three gates. The setting of both outlaw stories and popular Arthurian romances in Carlisle suggest the symbolic importance of this locale at the edge of England, since such narratives regularly entail the crossing of borders that separate not simply physical geography and national territories, but other categories central to these ballads, such as law and lawlessness, popular and elite, and oral and written. Carlisle in this way serves as the symbolic centre for many popular romances (see *Sir Gawain: Eleven Romances and Tales*, above).

3 The justice or *justiciar regis* was a royal agent who handled the pleas of the crown. The position was created to weaken the power of the Norman sheriff, who was often corrupt.

4 Alice's cry of 'treason' – whether directed at the old woman, or at the justice and the Sheriff – points up the contradictions and complications that pervade outlaw narratives: from the strict perspective of the law, it would be treasonous not to report William's appearance, or to seek his arrest, yet the narrator invites the audience to identify with William, so that his pursuers appear to be the traitors.

5 This entire episode – the outlaw besieged in his home with his wife and then burnt out – resembles two of the most memorable events in the thirteenth-century Icelandic outlaw tale, *Grettis saga*.

6 Like the *Gest of Robyn Hode*, the poem is divided into parts or 'fitts'. The word 'fitt' may be related to a weaver's term 'the thread with which weavers mark off a day's work' (*OED*).

7 Adam brings forth a writ – an inscribed parchment – that can pass as an official document prepared in the King's court. Such 'letters' (whether genuine, stolen or counterfeited) were frequently used to swindle or coerce ordinary citizens and minor officials in the later Middle Ages.

8 Presenting a document that seemed official – possessing a seal of some kind, and perhaps written in Latin – was often sufficient evidence to compel compliance from those not acquainted with the law; even if the porter could read English, the apparatus of the court (or its look-alike) would be enough to intimidate him, Adam surmises. The contrast sets those who are cowed by the very symbols of the law against those who literally take the law into their own hands.

9 The consistent use of the first-person plural possessive, 'our king', underscores the outlaws' fundamental allegiance to the monarch and central authority, even as they attack and subvert the powers of local officials.

10 When Adam Bell promises to be the worst porter that Carlisle has ever seen, he is playing the role of the 'bad servant', a popular theme also seen in *A Gest of Robyn Hode* when Little John steals the sheriff's silver.

11 The ballad clearly suggests that hostility to the outlaws is not confined to the local officials (justice, sheriff, mayor), but is shared by the citizens of Carlisle, who energetically join in the attack on Adam and his associates. A fundamental feature of noble outlaw stories is the support for the outlaws by the local community, for without such support those outside the law could hardly survive, let alone become heroes (Hobsbawm, *Bandits* [New York, Delacorte Press, 1969]). The mutual enmity here between the criminals and the townspeople is therefore somewhat unusual.

12 The term 'trysting tree' originally designated a hunting station, but here means meeting place.