

Robin Hood and Little John (Child 125A)

- 1 WHEN Robin Hood was about twenty years old,
 With a hey down down and a down
 He happend to meet Little John,
 A jolly brisk blade, right fit for the trade,
 For he was a lusty young man. 5
- 2 Tho he was calld Little, his limbs they were large,
 And his stature was seven foot high;
 Where-ever he came, they quak'd at his name,
 For soon he would make them to fly.
- 3 How they came acquainted, I 'll tell you in brief, 10
 If you will but listen a while;
 For this very jest, amongst all the rest,
 I think it may cause you to smile.
- 4 Bold Robin Hood said to his jolly bowmen, 15
 Pray tarry you here in this grove;
 And see that you all observe well my call,
 While thorough the forest I rove.
- 5 We have had no sport for these fourteen long days,
 Therefore now abroad will I go;
 Now should I be beat, and cannot retreat, 20
 My horn I will presently blow.
- 6 Then did he shake hands with his merry men all,
 And bid them at present good b'w'ye;
 Then, as near a brook his journey he took,
 A stranger he chanced to espy. 25
- 7 They happend to meet on a long narrow bridge,
 And neither of them would give way;
 Quoth bold Robin Hood, and sturdily stood,
 I'll show you right Nottingham play.
- 8 With that from his quiver an arrow he drew, 30

A broad arrow with a goose-wing:
The stranger reply'd, I 'll liquor thy hide,
If thou offerst to touch the string.

- 9 Quoth bold Robin Hood, Thou dost prate like an ass,
For were I to bend but my bow, 35
I could send a dart quite thro thy proud heart,
Before thou couldst strike me one blow.
- 10 'Thou talkst like a coward,' the stranger reply'd;
'Well armed with a long bow you stand,
To shoot at my breast, while I, I protest, 40
Have nought but a staff in my hand.'
- 11 'The name of a coward,' quoth Robin, 'I scorn,
Wherefore my long bow I 'll lay by;
And now, for thy sake, a staff will I take,
The truth of thy manhood to try.' 45
- 12 Then Robin Hood stept to a thicket of trees,
And chose him a staff of ground-oak;
Now this being done, away he did run
To the stranger, and merrily spoke:
- 13 Lo! see my staff, it is lusty and tough, 50
Now here on the bridge we will play;
Whoever falls in, the other shall win
The battel, and so we 'll away.
- 14 'With all my whole heart,' the stranger reply'd;
'I scorn in the least to give out;' 55
This said, they fell to 't without more dispute,
And their staffs they did flourish about.
- 15 And first Robin he gave the stranger a bang,
So hard that it made his bones ring:
The stranger he said, This must be repaid, 60
I 'll give you as good as you bring.
- 16 So long as I 'm able to handle my staff,
To die in your debt, friend, I scorn:

- Then to it each goes, and followd their blows,
As if they had been threshing of corn. 65
- 17 The stranger gave Robin a crack on the crown,
Which caused the blood to appear;
Then Robin, enrag'd, more fiercely engag'd,
And followd his blows more severe.
- 18 So thick and so fast did he lay it on him, 70
With a passionate fury and ire,
At every stroke, he made him to smoke,
As if he had been all on fire.
- 19 O then into fury the stranger he grew,
And gave him a damnable look, 75
And with it a blow that laid him full low,
And tumbld him into the brook.
- 20 'I prithee, good fellow, O where art thou now?'
The stranger, in laughter, he cry'd;
Quoth bold Robin Hood, Good faith, in the flood, 80
And floating along with the tide.
- 21 I needs must acknowledge thou art a brave soul;
With thee I 'll no longer contend;
For needs must I say, thou hast got the day,
Our battel shall be at an end. 85
- 22 Then unto the bank he did presently wade,
And pulld himself out by a thorn;
Which done, at the last, he blowd a loud blast
Straitway on his fine bugle-horn.
- 23 The eccho of which through the vallies did fly, 90
At which his stout bowmen appeard,
All cloathed in green, most gay to be seen;
So up to their master they steerd.
- 24 'O what 's the matter?' quoth William Stutely;
'Good master, you are wet to the skin:' 95
'No matter,' quoth he; 'The lad which you see,

- In fighting, hath tumbld me in.'
- 25 'He shall not go scot-free,' the others reply'd;
So strait they were seizing him there,
To duck him likewise; but Robin Hood cries, 100
He is a stout fellow, forbear.
- 26 There 's no one shall wrong thee, friend, be not afraid;
These bowmen upon me do wait;
There 's threescore and nine; if thou wilt be mine,
Thou shalt have my livery strait. 105
- 27 And other accoutrements fit for a man;
Speak up, jolly blade, never fear;
I 'll teach you also the use of the bow,
To shoot at the fat fallow-deer.
- 28 'O here is my hand,' the stranger reply'd, 110
'I 'll serve you with all my whole heart;
My name is John Little, a man of good mettle;
Nere doubt me, for I 'll play my part.'
- 29 His name shall be alterd,' quoth William Stutely,
'And I will his godfather be; 115
Prepare then a feast, and none of the least,
For we will be merry,' quoth he.
- 30 They presently fetchd in a brace of fat does,
With humming strong liquor likewise;
They lovd what was good; so, in the greenwood, 120
This pretty sweet babe they baptize.
- 31 He was, I must tell you, but seven foot high,
And, may be, an ell in the waste;
A pretty sweet lad; much feasting they had;
Bold Robin the christning grac'd. 125
- 32 With all his bowmen, which stood in a ring,
And were of the Notti[n]gham breed;
Brave Stutely comes then, with seven yeomen,
And did in this manner proceed.

- 33 'This infant was called John Little,' quoth he, 130
 'Which name shall be changed anon;
The words we 'll transpose, so where-ever he goes,
 His name shall be calld Little John.'
- 34 They all with a shout made the elements ring, 135
 So soon as the office was ore;
To feasting they went, with true merriment,
 And tippld strong liquor gillore.
- 35 Then Robin he took the pretty sweet babe, 140
 And cloathd him from top to the toe
In garments of green, most gay to be seen,
 And gave him a curious long bow.
- 36 'Thou shalt be an archer as well as the best, 145
 And range in the greenwood with us;
Where we 'll not want gold nor silver, behold,
 While bishops have ought in their purse.
- 37 'We live here like squires, or lords of renown, 150
 Without ere a foot of free land;
We feast on good cheer, with wine, ale and beer,
 And evry thing at our command.'
- 38 Then musick and dancing did finish the day; 155
 At length, when the sun waxed low,
Then all the whole train the grove did refrain,
 And unto their caves they did go.
- 39 And so ever after, as long as he livd, 155
 Altho he was proper and tall,
Yet nevertheless, the truth to express,
 Still Little John they did him call.