

The King's Disguise, and Friendship with Robin Hood (Child 151)

- 1 KING RICHARD hearing of the pranks
Of Robin Hood and his men,
He much admir'd, and more desir'd,
To see both him and them.
- 2 Then with a dozen of his lords
To Nottingham he rode;
When he came there, he made good cheer,
And took up his abode.
- 3 He having staid there some time,
But had no hopes to speed,
He and his lords, with [free] accord,
All put on monk's weeds.
- 4 From Fountain-abby they did ride,
Down to Barnsdale;
Where Robin Hood preparèd stood
All company to assail.
- 5 The king was higher then the rest,
And Robin thought he had
An abbot been whom he did spleen;
To rob him he was glad.
- 6 He took the king's horse by the head,
'Abbot,' says he, 'abide;
I am bound to rue such knaves as you,
That live in pomp and pride.'
- 7 'But we are messengers from the king,'
The king himself did say;
'Near to this place his royal Grace
To speak with thee does stay.'
- 8 'God save the king,' said Robin Hood,
'And all that wish him well;
He that does deny his sovereignty,
I wish he was in hell.'
- 9 'O thyself thou curses,' says the king,
'For thou a traitor art.'
'Nay, but that you are his messenger,

I swear you lie in heart.

- 10 'For I never yet hurt any man
That honest is and true;
But those that give their minds to live
Upon other men's due.
- 11 'I never hurt the husbandman,
That use to till the ground;
Nor spill their blood that range the wood
To follow hawk or hound.
- 12 'My chiefest spite to clergy is,
Who in these days bear a great sway;
With fryars and monks, with their fine sprunks,
I make my chiefest prey.
- 13 'But I am very glad,' says Robin Hood,
'That I have met you here;
Come, before we end, you shall, my friend,
Taste of our green-wood cheer.'
- 14 The king did then marvel much,
And so did all his men;
They thought with fear, what kind of cheer
Robin would provide for them.
- 15 Robin took the king's horse by the head,
And led him to the tent;
'Thou would not be so usd,' quoth he,
'But that my king thee sent.
- 16 'Nay, more than that,' said Robin Hood,
'For good king Richard's sake,
If you had as much gold as ever I told,
I would not one penny take.'
- 17 Then Robin set his horn to his mouth,
And a loud blast he did blow,
Till a hundred and ten of Robin Hood's men
Came marching all of a row.
- 18 And when they came bold Robin before,
Each man did bend his knee;
'O,' thought the king, 'tis a gallant thing,
And a seemly sight to see.'

- 19 Within himself the king did say,
 These men of Robin Hood's
More humble be than mine to me;
 So the court may learn of the woods.
- 20 So then they all to dinner went,
 Upon a carpet green;
Black, yellow, red, finely mingled,
 Most curious to be seen.
- 21 Venison and fowls were plenty there,
 With fish out of the river:
King Richard swore, on sea or shore,
 He neer was feasted better.
- 22 Then Robin takes a can of ale:
 'Come, let us now begin;
Come, every man shall have his can;
 Here's a health unto the king.'
- 23 The king himself drank to the king,
 So round about it went;
Two barrels of ale, both stout and stale,
 To pledge that health were spent.
- 24 And after that, a bowl of wine
 In his hand took Robin Hood;
'Until I die, I'll drink wine,' said he,
 'While I live in the green-wood.
- 25 'Bend all your bows,' said Robin Hood,
 'And with the grey goose wing
Such sport now shew as you would do
 In the presence of the king.'
- 26 They shewd such brave archery,
 By cleaving sticks and wands,
That the king did say, Such men as they
 Live not in many lands.
- 27 'Well, Robin Hood,' then says the king,
 'If I could thy pardon get,
To serve the king in every thing
 Wouldst thou thy mind firm set?'

- 28 'Yes, with all my heart,' bold Robin said,
So they flung off their hoods;
To serve the king in every thing,
They swore they would spend their bloods.
- 29 'For a clergyman was first my bane,
Which makes me hate them all;
But if you 'll be so kind to me,
Love them again I shall.'
- 30 The king no longer could forbear,
For he was movd with ruth;
['Robin,' said he, 'I now tell thee
The very naked truth.]
- 31 'I am the king, thy sovereign king,
That appears before you all;
When Robin see that it was he,
Strait then he down did fall.
- 32 'Stand up again,' then said the king,
'I 'll thee thy pardon give;
Stand up, my friend; who can contend,
When I give leave to live?'
- 33 So they are all gone to Nottingham,
All shouting as they came;
But when the people them did see,
They thought the king was slain,
- 34 And for that cause the outlaws were come,
To rule all as they list;
And for to shun, which way to run
The people did not wist.
- 35 The plowman left the plow in the fields,
The smith ran from his shop;
Old folks also, that scarce could go,
Over their sticks did hop.
- 36 The king soon let them understand
He had been in the green wood,
And from that day, for evermore,
He 'd forgiven Robin Hood.
- 37 When the people they did hear,

And the truth was known,
They all did sing, 'God save the king!
Hang care, the town 's our own!'

38 'What 's that Robin Hood?' then said the sheriff;
 'That varlet I do hate;
Both me and mine he causd to dine,
 And servd us all with one plate.'

39 'Ho, ho,' said Robin, 'I know what you mean;
 Come, take your gold again;
Be friends with me, and I with thee,
 And so with every man.

40 'Now, master sheriff, you are paid,
 And since you are beginner,
As well as you give me my due;
 For you neer paid for that dinner.

41 'But if that it should please the king
 So much your house to grace
To sup with you, for to speak true,
 [I] know you neer was base.'

42 The sheriff could not [that] gain say,
 For a trick was put upon him;
A supper was drest, the king was guest,
 But he thought 't would have undone him.

43 They are all gone to London court,
 Robin Hood, with all his train;
He once was there a noble peer,
 And now he 's there again.

44 Many such pranks brave Robin playd
 While he lived in the green wood:
Now, my friends, attend, and hear an end
 Of honest Robin Hood.