

Robin Hood and the Pedlars (137)

- 1 WILL you heare a tale of Robin Hood,
Will Scarlett, and Little John?
Now listen awhile, it will make you smile,
As before it hath many done.
- 2 They were archers three, of hie degree,
As good as ever drewe bowe;
Their arrowes were long and their armes were strong,
As most had cause to knowe.
- 3 But one sommers day, as they toke their way
Through the forrest of greene Sherwood,
To kill the kings deare, you shall presently heare
What befell these archers good.
- 4 They were ware on the roade of three peddlers with loade,
Ffor each had his packe,
Ffull of all wares for countrie faires,
Trusst up upon his backe.
- 5 A good oke staffe, a yard and a halfe,
Each one had in his hande;
And they were all bound to Nottingham towne,
As you shall understand.
- 6 ‘Yonder I see bolde peddlers three,’
Said Robin to Scarlett and John;
‘We ’le search their packes upon their backes
Before that they be gone.
- 7 ‘Holla, good fellowes!’ quod Robin Hood,
‘Whither is it ye doe goe?
Now stay and rest, for that is the best,
’T is well ye should doe soe.’
- 8 ‘Noe rest we neede, on our roade we speede,
Till to Nottingham we get:’
‘Thou tellst a lewde lye,’ said Robin, ‘for I
Can see that ye swinke and swet.’
- 9 The peddlers three crosst over the lee,
They did not list to fight:
‘I charge you tarrie,’ quod Robin, ‘for marry,

This is my owne land by right.

- 10 'This is my manner and this is my parke,
I would have ye for to knowe;
Ye are bolde outlawes, I see by cause
Ye are so prest to goe.'
- 11 The peddlers three turned round to see
Who it might be they herd;
Then agen went on as they list to be gone,
And never answered word.
- 12 Then toke Robin Hood an arrow so good,
Which he did never lacke,
And drew his bowe, and the swift arrowe
Went through the last peddlers packe.
- 13 Ffor him it was well on the packe it fell,
Or his life had found an ende;
And it pierst the skin of his backe within,
Though the packe did stand his frend.
- 14 Then downe they flung their packes eche one,
And stayde till Robin came:
Quod Robin, I saide ye had better stayde;
Good sooth, ye were to blame.
- 15 'And who art thou? by S. Crispin, I vowe
I 'le quickly cracke thy head!
Cried Robin, Come on, all three, or one;
It is not so soone done as said.
- 16 My name, by the roode, is Robin Hood,
And this is Scarlett and John;
It is three to three, ye may plainelie see,
Soe now, brave fellowes, laye on.
- 17 The first peddlars blowe brake Robins bowe
That he had in his hand;
And Scarlett and John, they eche had one
That they unneath could stand.
- 18 'Now holde your handes,' cride Robin Hood,
'Ffor ye have got oken staves;
But tarie till wee can get but three,
And a fig for all your braves.'

- 19 Of the peddlers the first, his name Kit o Thirske,
Said, We are all content;
Soe eche tooke a stake for his weapon, to make
The peddlers to repent.
- 20 Soe to it they fell, and their blowes did ring well
Uppon the others backes;
And gave the peddlers cause to wish
They had not cast their packes.
- 21 Yet the peddlers three of their blowes were so free
That Robin began for to rue;
And Scarlett and John had such loade laide on
It made the sunne looke blue.
- 22 At last Kits oke caught Robin a stroke
That made his head to sound;
He staggerd, and reelde, till he fell on the fiede,
And the trees with him went round.
- 23 ‘Now holde your handes,’ cride Little John,
And soe said Scarlett eke;
‘Our maister is slaine, I tell you plaine,
He never more will speake.’
- 24 ‘Now, heaven forefend he come to that ende,’
Said Kit, ‘I love him well;
But lett him learne to be wise in turne,
And not with pore peddlers mell.
- 25 ‘In my packe, God wot, I a balsame have got
That soone his hurts will heale;’
And into Robin Hoods gaping mouth
He presentlie powrde some deale.
- 26 ‘Now fare ye well, tis best not to tell
How ye three peddlers met;
Or if ye doe, pritheee tell alsoe
How they made ye swinke and swett.’
- 27 Poore Robin in sound they left on the ground,
And hied them to Nottingham,
While Scarlett and John Robin tended on,
Till at length his senses came.

- 28 Noe soone[r], in haste, did Robin Hood taste
The balsame he had tane,
Than he gan to spewe, and up he threwe
The balsame all againe.
- 29 And Scarlett and John, who were looking on
Their maister as he did lie,
Had their faces besmeard, both eies and beard,
Therewith most piteously.
- 30 Thus ended that fray; soe beware alwaye
How ye doe challenge foes;
Looke well aboute they are not to stoute,
Or you may have worst of the blowes.