

Robin Hood to the Rescue!



WIDO . . . BEGAN HIS ENTERTAINMENT WITH A BALLAD

*(See page 3)*

# Robin Hood to the Rescue!

By  
AGNES BLUNDELL

*Illustrated by Frank Rogers*

ST. AIDAN PRESS, LLC  
Morning View, Kentucky

Robin Hood to the Rescue!

First published in 1939 by Burns Oates & Washbourne Ltd., London.

Typesetting, layout and cover design copyright 2024 St. Aidan Press, LLC.

Cover art is a royalty-free image from *Medieval Design*, copyright 2007 by Dover Publications, Inc.

All rights reserved.

ISBN-13: 978-1-962503-12-9

ISBN-10: 1-962503-12-7

For more information, contact:

[www.staidanpress.com](http://www.staidanpress.com)

[staidanpress@gmail.com](mailto:staidanpress@gmail.com)

We have made no intentional change from the original text except to correct mistakes in spelling and punctuation.

# Contents

	PAGE
CHAPTER ONE. . . . .	1
CHAPTER TWO. . . . .	8
CHAPTER THREE . . . . .	16
CHAPTER FOUR . . . . .	27
CHAPTER FIVE. . . . .	34
CHAPTER SIX . . . . .	43
CHAPTER SEVEN. . . . .	51
CHAPTER EIGHT. . . . .	56
CHAPTER NINE . . . . .	63
CHAPTER TEN . . . . .	71
CHAPTER ELEVEN . . . . .	79
CHAPTER TWELVE. . . . .	87



# Robin Hood to the Rescue!

## CHAPTER ONE

**I**N THE MERRY days of old, there was no merrier place than Sherwood Forest, for though the jolly outlaw, Robin Hood, was a reformed character and had been rechristened and knighted by King Richard, he hunted the royal forests as blithely as ever. True, he no longer emptied travellers' pockets, nor made them pay toll, willy-nilly, when they crossed his domain, but he befriended the poor as stoutly as ever, and challenged any rich baron or tax-gatherer who dared to act unjustly.

Robin only used his title of Sir Adam de Everingham on state occasions, and though his headquarters were supposed to be in Barnsleydale where the King had granted him land, he was more often to be found in Sherwood, under a lodge of green boughs, or sleeping out on the open hill-side. His band of followers had followed his fortunes and had added the badges of Royal Rangers and Woodwards to their old uniforms of Lincoln Green. They were still the best bowmen in the countryside, and popular with all who had not evil deeds on their consciences.

The chief friends of Robin Hood and his lady, Maid Marian, were the noble Sir Aelfric de Southwell and his family. The Knight indeed was seldom at home, as he was one of Cœur de Lion's most trusted leaders, and was now busy in Normandy assisting his master to construct the new Castle Gaillard, or Saucy Castle, to overawe the French. His wife Etheldreda meanwhile

*Robin Hood to the Rescue!*

looked after the demesne, and her five children: Eadgar, who was page to the Bishop of Ely, Osmund, his junior by a year and now nearly thirteen, Hild, who would be twelve next birthday, Stephen, eight, and Sibell, four. They lived in a fortified Manor House next to Southwell Minster, and Eadgar was still at home because he was always given leave to return to Southwell for the great celebrations at Whitsuntide, the Minster having special privileges for this feast.

It was glorious June weather, and the Castle children were allowed to ramble at their will about the forest which covered the higher part of the country. The ground surrounding Southwell itself was extremely watery, for not only did the district boast at least seven wells, patronized since Roman times, but was traversed by the mighty River Trent and its tributary brooks. Etheldreda fondly imagined that she might at last enjoy a little peace, for her three great enemies, Guy de Gisburn, Hal of Nottingham, and Fulk de Brent, were now dead, and it seemed as though no one were likely to trouble her during her husband's absence, as had been the case on previous occasions. There had been many guests at the Manor during Whitsuntide, but all had now departed to their homes. Wido, the travelling minstrel, lingered behind and came up one evening to give a last entertainment before he took to the road again.

He was a great friend of the children, and his arrival was a delight to the whole Castle. Eadgar was never tired of listening to the immense romances which Wido could relate, partly in prose and partly in verse. Perhaps his favourite of all was the Romaunt of Arthur, a medley of thrilling tales, which Wido had picked up in Wales. Each separate story somehow hooked into three or four more, and there seemed no reason why the romaunt should ever come to an end.

Osmund loved the parts about jousts and fighting, but he thought the tales of magic very foolish.



## *Chapter One*

"I'd much rather the knight just won by courage, Wido," he declared. "Magic is too easy—besides, it isn't real."

"I wouldn't be sure, young master," Wido always replied.

Soon everyone gathered in the Great Hall; the lady Etheldreda took her place near the hearth but with her chair turned round to face the room. Wido was tuning his lute as he paced about in front of her; the ladies of the household and the children sat in a semicircle on either side, while the maids, farm-servants and men-at-arms assembled at the back. The Seneschal posted himself opposite the lady, as was his right, and the hinds and villeins crowded in at the far end of the hall.

Wido had a fine baritone voice, and began his entertainment with a ballad. Everyone clasped hands and swung arms and body in time to the tune, rather in the way people do when they sing *Auld Lang Syne* nowadays. It was a new ballad all about a knight who parted from the lady he loved to go to the Holy Wars, and of how he came back long years afterwards disguised as a pilgrim to find out if his lady had kept faith with him. He met a false friend, who declared that his Adeliza had forgotten him and married the Lord of Castles Three, so the pilgrim rushed into the forest wide and became a hermit. After that the children rather lost the thread of the tale, but it ended tragically as such ballads always did. The lady dismissed the wicked lord and began to pine away, and somehow or other she wandered into the forest glade and died of grief just outside the hermitage while the hermit was at his orisons within.

"It's not a bit like what would really happen," muttered Eadgar. "Hermits retire from the world to think about God—not about faithless ladies."

"He ought to have slain the Lord of Castles Three," declared Osmund, "didn't he, Wido? Didn't he slay the false knight?"

"The ballad does not say so," replied Wido, twanging his lute crossly. He disliked any interruption and could not bear to

*Robin Hood to the Rescue!*

be criticized. "Maybe the spectre cold of the hermit bold that night to him appeared——"

This time it was Stephen who interrupted. "I don't like it," he cried loudly.

The lady Etheldreda shook her head at the gleeman. She had warned him beforehand not to mention either spectres or witches as she did not want Stephen and Sibell to be frightened.

A minstrel had to please the lady of the Manor at all costs, so he smiled, asked a riddle which had a punning answer and began another tale.

"Once upon a time," he said, "there was a hill shepherd in Wales. He was so poor that he had nothing at all of his own. One day his master called him and bid him drive his flock to London town and sell it there as the price of wool in Wales had fallen. So the shepherd cut a stout hazel staff from the thicket and went his way. 'Twas a long journey, but he beguiled the time by singing the old ballads with which the Welsh entertain each other when they meet in the warm farmhouses and make merry, when the snow is on the hill." Here Wido burst into song:

"King Arthur of the Table Round  
A mighty man was he  
With his Knights so bold  
And his crown of gold  
And his Kingdom from sea to sea."

"It wasn't really from sea to sea," began Eadgar, but everyone else said:

"Hush!"

"Well, you know all about King Arthur, it seems," cried Wido quickly dropping into prose again. "Suffice it then to say that under his rule the Cymri were a great and valiant nation. When Arthur fell in battle, he was mourned by mortals and all in the land of faerie, but a rumour grew that Arthur was not dead, but

## *Chapter One*

would return when the times were ripe and rule over his land again in peace and glory. 'Twas the prophecy, too, of Merlin the magician, who wrote hundreds of prophecies in mystic verses called triads, which the Welsh preserve with great reverence."

"Have any of them come true?" inquired Eadgar.

"Of course, or they wouldn't have been prophecies," retorted Wido, and passed rapidly on, lest the young scholar should be inclined to argue the point.

"The shepherd left his mountains  
In the land of singing streams,  
In the land of night-born fountains,  
In the land of radiant gleams;  
And he came to London town,  
And on London bridge stood he,  
And he gazed up-river and down  
In bewildered reverie—

"That is to say, he was so astounded, poor, simple fellow, at the array of shops and booths on each side of the bridge, and at all the boats of merchandise and the wherries plying for hire down below, and at the bawling of the merchants' varlets, proclaiming their wares, and all the bustle of town, that he was as one stunned. More than one rogue slipped a hand in his pocket, but 'twas empty. He had sold the sheep, lodged the money with a merchant, as his master had bid him, and slipped the luck-penny into his shoe. Presently as he stood still, craning his neck over the parapet, a hand fell on his shoulder, and a voice asked him a question. The shepherd whirled round and saw a stranger in a big cloak with a large book under his arm. 'I have no English,' he said, very respectfully, for he saw at once that his questioner was a wise man.

"Where got you yon speckled staff?" said he, in very good North-country Welsh.

"In my own land," said the shepherd.

*Robin Hood to the Rescue!*

“Take me to the place and your fortune is made,” said the wise man. “For I can tell by the look of your staff, that under the roots of that hazel lies buried a vast treasure of gold and silver.”

At this point the lady turned the hour sand-glass, which stood on a stool beside her. Wido took the hint and condensed his story.

“In a week and a day, the two men were standing on the sheep-walk at the very spot,” he went on. “The stranger said some queer words out of his book, and moved a stone at the root of the hazel. A big hole opened out before them and steps leading down into a vast cavern. ‘Follow me,’ said the magician. ‘But mind how you go. We shall pass three great bells and if you touch any of them, we are both dead men.’ So saying, he stepped briskly down the stairs and the shepherd followed him into a huge subterranean chamber. In the centre was a circular table round which lay knights in armour with their weapons beside them. The shepherd marked one taller than the rest, with a crown of gold on his head and a red dragon on his shield. The table was piled with gold and silver dishes, bags of coin and bowls of precious stones. ‘Take what you like but make no noise,’ said the wise man.

“Now the shepherd had never seen such riches in his life, and he seized the biggest and heaviest he could and hurried to the stairs, meaning to put his treasure in a safe place and come back for more. He was in such haste that he forgot to be careful, and a long bar of gold struck against one of the bells as he staggered by. Oh! what a noise it made, like all the thunderstorms you have heard, rolled into one. The shepherd nearly died of fright! The warriors in the cave leaped up from sleep and seized their arms, but when the wise man shouted above the tumult: ‘The time is not yet!’ they all sank down again, and the shepherd and the magician dropped their treasure and fled into the open air. ‘You fool,’ said the magician, ‘you did not heed my warning,

## *Chapter One*

and now you have broken the spell. Whoever looks upon Arthur again until his hour comes, is doomed to wither away and die.’

“With that, he pushed back the stone and stamped it down. The shepherd ran home, meaning to come back some other day, but search as he might, he never found the place again and never again set eyes on the wise man. The few jewels which he had slipped into his pocket, made him rich enough to buy a farm on which he lived happily ever after.”

As soon as Wido finished the lady Etheldreda made a sign to the Seneschal who made a sign to the steward who made a sign to the pantrymen. Everyone got up, the shepherd, the swineherd, and the hayward withdrew into a group, as behoved freemen, while the grooms and villeins lifted out the trestle tables which had been laid against the wall, and the cook and his underlings hurried away to send in supper.

Hild remained dreamily sitting in the rushes, and Alice had to call her three times before she could get her attention.

The elder children were expected to help in the serving and then to take their places next their mother at the high table, where the lady kept a watchful eye on all that was going on, and noted any waste or slovenliness with a prompt reproof. Stephen and Sibell were carried off to bed where they were regaled with honey possets as a treat. Wido tucked into boar’s ham with a good appetite, and Hild set a dish of dried plums near him, for she knew his fondness for this form of dessert. Dried fruit and sugar plums were only served on special occasions.