

Philip Gidlington

SIR CHRISTOPHER

CHAPTER I

ROBIN HOOD'S BARN

THROUGH the January twilight a sail-boat steered its course by the light of a fire which blazed high in the throat of the chimney at St. Gabriel's Manor. Within the hall, circled by the light from the fire, a Danish hound stretched its lazy length on the floor, and, pillowing his head against the dog's body, lay a boy eight or nine years old.

He was a plain laddie, with a freckled nose, a wide mouth, and round apple cheeks over which flaxen curls tumbled in confusion. His big eyes, the redeeming feature of the face, were just now fixed upon the shadows cast by the motion of his joined hands on the wall. At length the lips parted over a row of baby teeth with a gap in the centre, through which the little tongue showed blood-red, as the boy laughed long and loud.

"Thee, Knut!" he lisped, with that occasional slip of the letter s which was a lingering trick of babyhood and cost him much shame,