

Soon after daybreak next morning, Robin started for the town. On his way he met a beggar who wore a cloak patched with black, blue and red.

Robin accosted him whereupon the beggar said there was a sight to be seen in Nottingham that day, and he was running away because the sheriff had wanted him to be his executioner. This at once gave Robin an idea and he proposed that they should exchange garments. To this the beggar readily agreed and each went on his way well satisfied with the exchange.

Robin hurried on to Nottingham, the streets of which he found filled with people and everyone discussing the merits of the execution that was to take place. A cry was raised of "Hangman!" followed by some hisses which caused Robin to turn his head, and he found to his astonishment that he was the object of the people's attention and that a crowd was gathering at his heels. He walked as quickly as he could through the town toward the sheriff's house. The time fixed for the execution had not yet arrived, but Robin met the sheriff riding on horseback followed by a number of his men, all armed with spears, on their way to the jail. On catching sight of Robin the sheriff called out:

"Well, wilt thou be hangman today?"

Robin nodded his assent.

"It is well," said the sheriff, "thou hast saved me some trouble, but I'm afraid thou wilt have to look well after the suits that they be not torn after the hanging."

Robin shook his head and laughed.

"Well, if they be torn, I'll make it up to thee. Thirteenpence," the sheriff added, "'twill be a good day's work for thee."

On seeing the sheriff the people shrank away. Robin fell into the procession immediately behind the sheriff, and, when they came to the prison, the two entered, leaving the remainder outside.

"Has our mother come?" asked Jolly, the youngest of the three prisoners.

"Thou dost not need thy mother here," said the sheriff. "Thou hadst better think of the strange journey thou'rt about to make. Bind them!" he ordered, turning to Robin.

This Robin immediately proceeded to do, and in the operation managed to whisper into the ear of one of them, "All's right: Robin will be here." These words the prisoner contrived to pass on in a whisper to his brothers.

Soon afterwards the men were led out and placed in a low cart where they knelt down and the cart moved on surrounded by the sheriff's spearmen.

There was a great crowd of people in the streets and many ill words were shouted at the sheriff as he rode along. At length they came within sight of the gallows and Robin cast a searching glance among the crowd, and, to his joy, he recognized Alan and Will and thereby knew that the force he relied on was near at hand.