

THE MERRY PRANKS OF ROBIN GOOD-FELLOW: VERY PLEASANT AND WITTY.
FROM AN EDITION OF 1628

CHAPTER I.

Showing his birth, and whose son he was.

HERE do begin the merry jests of Robin Good-fellow;
I'd wish you for to read this book, if you his Pranks would know.
But first I will declare his birth, and what his Mother was,
And then how Robin merrily did bring his skills to pass.

In time of old, when Fairies used to wander in the night,
And through key-holes swiftly glide, Now mark my story right,
Among these pretty fairy Elves Was Oberon, their King,
Who used to keep them company, still at their revelling.

And sundry houses they did use, but one, above the rest,
Wherein a comely Lass did dwell that pleased King Oberon best.
This lovely Damsel, neat and fair, so courteous, meek, and mild,
As says my book, by Oberon, she was begot with child.

She knew not who the Father was ; but thus to all would say
In night time he to her still came, and went away ere day.
The midwife having better skill than had this new made mother,
Quoth she, surely some Fairy it was, for it can be no other.

And so the old wife rightly judged, For it was so indeed.
This Fairy showed himself most kind, and helped his love at need;
For store of linen he provides, and brings her for her baby,
With dainty cakes and choice fare, he served her like a Lady.

The Christening time then being come, most merry they did pass;
The Gossips drained a cheerful cup as then provided was.
And Robin was the infant called, so named the Gossips by :
What pranks he played both day and night, I'll tell you certainly.

CHAPTER II.

Showing how Robin Good-fellow carried himself, and how he ran away from his
Mother.

WHILE yet he was a little lad and of a tender age,
He used much waggish tricks to men, as they at him would rage.
Unto his Mother they complained, which grieved her to hear,
And for these Pranks she threatened him he should have whipping cheer,

If that he did not leave his tricks, his jeering mocks and moves:
Quoth she, thou vile untutored youth, these Pranks no breeding shows:
I cannot to the market go, but ere I back return,
Thou scoffs my neighbours in such sort, which makes my heart to mourn.

But I will make you to repent, these things ere I have done:
I will no favour have on thee, although thou be my son.
Robin was grieved to hear these words, which she to him did say,
But to prevent his punishment, from her he ran away.

And travelling long upon the way, his hunger being great,
Unto a Tailor's house he came, and did entreat some meat:
The Taylor took compassion then upon this pretty youth,

And took him for his Prentice straight, as I have heard in truth.

CHAPTER III.

How Robin Good-fellow left his Master, and also how Oberon told him he should be turned into what shape he could wish or desire.

Now Robin Good-fellow, being placed with a Tailor, as you hear,
He grew a workman in short space, so well he plied his gear.
He had a gown which must be made, even with all haste and speed;
The Maid must have it against next day to be her wedding weed.

The Tailor he did labour hard till twelve a clock at night;
Between him and his servant then they finished it alright
The gown, but putting on the sleeves: quoth he unto his man,
I'll go to bed : whip on the sleeves as fast as ere you can.

So Robin straightway takes the gown and hangs it on a pin,
Then takes the sleeves and whips the gown; till day near did begin.
His Master rising in the morn, and seeing what he did,
Begun to chide ; quoth Robin then, I did as I was bid.

His Master then the gown did take and to his work did fall:
By that time he had done the same the Maid for it did call.
Quoth he to Robin, go thy way and fetch the remnants hither,
That yesterday we left, said he, we'll break our fasts together.

Then Robin goes him up the stairs and brings the remnants down,
Which, he did know his Master saved, out of the woman's gown.
The Tailor he was vexed at this; he meant remnants of meat,
That this good woman, ere she went, might there her breakfast eat.

Quoth she, this is a breakfast good I tell you, friend, indeed;
And to requite your love I will send for some drink with speed:
And Robin he must go for it with all the speed he may:
He takes the pot and money too, and runs from thence away.

When he had wandered all the day, a good way from the Town,
Unto a forest then he came: to sleep he laid him down.
Then Oberon came, with all his Elves, and danced about his son,
With music pleasing to the ear; and, when that it was done,

King Oberon lays a scroll by him, that he might understand
Whose son he was, and how he'd grant whatever he did demand:
To any form that he did please himself he would translate;
And how one day he'd send for him to see his fairy State.

Then Robin longs to know the truth of this mysterious skill,
And turns himself into what shape he thinks upon or will.
Sometimes a neighing horse was he, sometimes a grunting hog,
Sometimes a bird, sometimes a crow, sometimes a snarling dog.

CHAPTER IV.

How Robin Good-fellow was merry at the Bridehouse.

Now Robin having got this art, he oft would make good sport,
And hearing of a wedding day, he makes him ready for it.
Most like a jovial Fiddler then he dressed himself most gay,
And goes unto the wedding house, there on his crowd to play.

He welcome was unto this feast, and merry they were all;
He played and sung sweet songs all day, at night to sports did fall.
He first did put the candles out, and being in the dark,
Some would he strike and some would pinch, and then sing like a lark.

The candles being light again, and things well and quiet,
A goodly posset was brought in to mend their former diet.
Then Robin for to have the same did turn him to a Bear:
Straight at that sight the people all did run away for fear.

Then Robin did the posset eat, and having served them so,
Away goes Robin with all haste, then laughing hoe, hoe, hoe !

CHAPTER V.

Declaring how Robin Good-fellow served an old lecherous man.

THERE was an old man had a Niece, a very beauteous maid;
To wicked lust her Uncle sought, this fair one to persuade.

But she a young man loved too dear, to give consent thereto;
'Twas Robin's chance upon a time, to hear their grievous woe;
Content yourself, then Robin says, and I will ease your grief,
I have found out an excellent way that will yield you relief.

He sends them to be married straight, and he, in her disguise,
Hies home with all the speed he may to blind her Uncle's eyes:
And there he does his work with haste, doing more in one hour,
Such was his skill and workmanship, than she could do in four.

The old man wondered for to see, the work go on so fast,
And there with all more work does he unto good Robin cast.
Then Robin said to his old man, good Uncle, if you please
To grant me but one ten pound I'll yield your love-suit ease.

Ten pounds, quoth he, I will give thee, sweet Niece, with all my heart,
So thou wilt grant to me thy love, to ease my troubled heart.
Then let me a writing have, quoth he, from your own hand with speed,
That I may marry my sweet-heart, when I have done this deed.

The old man he did give consent that he these things should have,
Thinking that it had been his Niece that did this bargain crave;
And unto Robin then quoth he, my gentle Niece, behold,
Go thou into thy chamber soon, and he goes to bring the gold.

When he into the chamber came, thinking indeed to play,
Straight Robin upon him doth fall, and carries him away
Into the chamber where the two fair Lovers did abide,
And gives to them their Uncle old, Aye, and the gold beside.

The old man vainly Robin sought, so many shapes he tries;
Sometimes he was a hare or hound, sometimes like bird he flies.
The more he strove the less he sped, the Lovers all did see;
And thus did Robin favour them full kind and merrily.

Thus Robin lived a merry life as any could enjoy,
Amongst country farms he did resort and oft would folks annoy:
But if the maids do call to him, he still away will go
In knavish sort, and to himself, he'd laugh out hoe, hoe, hoe!

He oft would beg and crave an alms, but take nought that they'd give :
In several shapes he'd fly the world, thus madly did he live.
Sometimes a cripple he would seem, sometimes a soldier brave:
Sometimes a fox, sometimes a hare; brave pastimes would he have.

Sometimes an owl he'd seem to be, sometimes a skipping frog;
Sometimes a kirn, in Irish shape, to leap over mire or bog:
Sometime he'd counterfeit a voice, and travellers call astray,
Sometimes a walking fire he'd be, and lead them from their way.

Some call him Robin Good-fellow, Hob goblin, or mad Crisp,
And some again do term him oft by name of Will the Wisp;
But call him by what name you list, I have studied on my pillow,
I think the best name he deserves is Robin the Good Fellow.

At last upon a summer's night King Oberon found him out,
And with his Elves in dancing wise straight circled him about.
The Fairies danced, and little Tom Thumb on his bag-pipe did play,
And thus they danced their fairy round till almost break of day.

Then Phoebus he most gloriously begins to grace the air,
When Oberon with his fairy train, begins to make repair,
With speed unto the Fairy land, they swiftly took their way,
And I out of my dream awaked, and so 'twas a perfect day.

Thus having told my dream at full, I'll bid you all farewell.
If you applaud mad Robin's pranks, maybe ere long I'll tell
Some other stories to your ears, which shall contentment give:
To gain your favours I will seek, The longest day I live.

**Source: The mad pranks and merry jests of Robin Goodfellow reprinted from
the edition of 1628. with an introduction by J. Payne Collier...
Published 1841 by [Reprinted for the Percy society by C. Richards](#) in [London](#) .**