



## *How Allan-a-Dale's Courting Was Aided*

“What is thy name?’ then said Robin Hood,  
‘Come tell me, without any fail.’  
‘By the faith o’ my body,’ then said the young man,  
‘My name ‘tis Allan-a-Dale.’”

**F**riar Tuck and Much, the miller’s son, became good friends over the steaming stew they cooked together for the merry men that evening. Tuck was mightily pleased when he found a man in the forest who cooked so well, while Much marvelled at the friar’s knowledge of herbs and woodland things that flavored a stew greatly. So they gabbed together like two old gossips and, between them, made such a tasty meal that Robin Hood and his followers seemed as if they would never

stop eating. And the friar said grace, too, over the food, and Robin said "Amen!" And from then on they always had **Mass** on Sundays.

**MASS**  
The religious service of the Roman Catholic Church.

Robin walked in the wood that evening with his stomach full and his heart, therefore, full of love for other men. He did not stop the first passerby, as he often did. Instead he stepped behind a tree when he heard a man's voice singing and waited.

Like Will Scarlet, this fellow was clad in scarlet, though he did not look quite as fine a gentleman. He was a sturdy yeoman of honest face, with a voice far sweeter than Will's. He seemed to be a strolling **minstrel**. He carried a harp in his hand, which he strummed, while his tenor voice rang out with:

*"Hey down, a down, a down!  
I've a lassie back in town;  
Come day, come night,  
Come dark or light,  
She will wed me, back in town!"*

Robin let the singer pass.



**MINSTREL**  
Minstrels were traveling singers and poets who usually also played the harp.

“‘Tis not in me to disturb a lover this night,” he muttered, as a memory of Marian came back to him. “May their wedding be a happy one.”

So Robin went back to his camp, where he told of the minstrel.

“If any of you set eyes on him after this,” he said finally, “bring him to me, for I wish to talk with him.”

The very next day his wish was answered. Little John and Much, the miller’s son, were out together on a hunting expedition when they spied the same young man—at least they thought it must be he, for he was clad in scarlet and carried a harp in his hand. But now he came drooping along, his clothes all in tatters, and at every step he sighed. Little John and Much stepped forward.

No sooner did the young man catch sight of them than he bent his bow and held an arrow back to his ear.

“Stand off!” he said. “What do you want with me?”

“Put down your weapon,” said Much; “we will not harm you, but you must come before our master, under his oak tree.”

So the minstrel put down his bow and allowed himself to be led to Robin Hood.

“How, now!” said Robin, when he saw the minstrel’s sorry look. “Are you not the one I heard yesterday singing so cheerfully about ‘a lassie back i’ the town’?”

“The same in body, sir,” replied the other sadly, “but my spirit is sadly changed.”

“Tell me your tale,” said Robin; “perhaps I can help you.”

“No man on earth can do that, I fear,” said the stranger, “but I’ll tell you the tale. Yesterday I stood pledged to a maid and thought I would marry her soon. But she has been taken from me and is to become an old knight’s bride this very day. As for me, I do not care what happens to me, or how soon, without her.”

“Be brave!” said Robin. “How did the old knight get this sudden advantage?”

“This way: the **Normans** overrun us, and no one can oppose them. This old Crusader coveted the land where my lady dwells. The estate is not large, but it is all her own. Knowing this, her brother says she must marry a nobleman who has a title, and he and the old knight have fixed it up for today.”

**NORMANS**  
People of Scandinavian descent who occupied Normandy, a region of France, in the 10th century. England was conquered by the Normans in 1066.