

Early English Ballads and the poems they make

Oral roots, cheap print, and the literary uses
of ballad material


A New Song... between Robin Hood and the jovial Tinker (late 1600s)

adding episodes to a well-known story

EBBA ID: 20729
Magdalene College -
Pepys 2.107

<https://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/20729/xml>

**A New Song to drive away cold Winter,
Between Robin Hood and the jovial Tinker.**
How Robin by a wife, the Tinker did cheer,
But at the length they shall bear, the Tinker did him beat,
Where by the name, they did then agree,
They play *to the tune of, In Summer time.*



In summer time when leaves grow green
down, a down, a down,
And birds sing on every tree,
hey down, a down, a down,
Robin Hood went to Nottingham,
down, a down, a down,
to fall as he could dice,
hey down, a down, a down,
And as he came to Nottingham,
a Tinker he did meet,
and seeing him a lusty bloke,
he did him kindly greet.
Where dost thou live, ah Robin Hood,
I pray thee now me tell,
and news I hear there is abroad,
a feat all is not well.
What is that news the Tinker said,
tell me without delay,
I am a Tinker by my trade,
and do live at liberty.
As for the news quoth Robin Hood,
it is but as I told,
Two tinkers they were set to work,
for tinkling and for beer.
If that be all the Tinker said,
no I may say to you,
Your news it is not worth a fart,
more than they will be true.
For drinking of good ale and beer,
you will not lose your part,
So let my faith quoth Robin Hood,
I love it with all my heart.

What news abroad, quoth Robin Hood,
tell me what thou dost hear,
Being thou goest from town to town,
Some news thou need not fear.
All the news the tinker said,
I hear, it is no more,
It is to seek a bold Outlaw,
which they call Robin Hood.
I ha' a warrant from the King,
to take him where he is,
If we can tell me where he is,
I will make you a man.
The King would give us hundred pound,
that he could but him see,
and if we can but show him get,
it will serve you and me.
Let me see that warrant, said Robin Hood,
for see if it be right,
and I will do the best I can,
for to take him this night.
That to it? No, the Tinker said,
none with a bow and
and where he is, if you'll not tell,
I will buy your face a man.
But Robin Hood perceiving well,
down, a down, a down,
how then the game would go,
hey down, a down, a down,
If you will go to Nottingham,
down, a down, a down,
I'll find you a man,
hey down, a down, a down,
I'll find you a man,

The Tinker and a bold free Ball,
down, a down, a down,
which was both good and strong,
Robin he had a good strong blow,
So they went both along,
hey down, etc.

And when they came to Nottingham,
there they took up their tent,
And they call'd for ale and wine,
to drink it was no sin.
But ale and wine the y' want to eat,
that the tinker he forget,
what thing he was about to do,
it fell to his lot.

That while the tinker fell asleep,
he made them haste away,
And left the tinker in the lurch,
for the great sin to pay.
So when the tinker awakened,
was fain that he was gone,
He called out soon for his host,
and that he made his moan,
I ha' a warrant from the King,
which must have none the poor,
That is to seek a bold Outlaw,
some call him Robin Hood.
But now my warrant and money's gone,
nothing I have to pay,
And he that promises to be my friend,
he is gone and he's away.
That friend you speak of said the host,
they call him Robin Hood,
And when that friend he met with you,
he warrant you little good,
had I known it had been he,
when that I had him here,
I should have made him a good friend,
which should have paid your debt.
In the mean time I was away,
no longer here to be,
But I will go and seek him out,
what else do you desire.
But one thing I would gladly know,
what bet's I have to pay,
Ten Shillings will I have to pay,
I'll pay without delay.
O else take your my working dog,
and my good hammer too,
and if I light but on that knave,
I will then soon pay you.
The only way then said the host,
and not to stand in fear,
Is to seek him amongst the Parks,
killing of the Kings Deer.
The tinker he then went with speed,
and made them no delay,
And so he had then found Robin Hood,
that they might have a fray.

And when they both to a bath,
to wash them of the dirt,
The tinker in that bath Robin Hood
that bath come in to meet.
No sooner, no sooner, the tinker said,
and that you soon shall meet,
Whether of the bath seem those words,
my Crab-tree staff shall show.
Then Robin drew his salted blade,
made them of truly fear.
For the tinker he laid on so fast,
that he is now Robin Hood.
Then Robin anger had a lie,
he thought full manly,
That he would make the tinker,
about them at to be.
Which that they both about again,
they plied their weapons fast,
The tinker that he has names to lose,
that he made him yield at last.
I soon, a bold Robin he cries,
if thou wilt grant it me,
I'll give thee that which thou
I'll bring thee on this Tree.
But the Tinker looking then about,
Robin he had him did know,
Then came unto him like a lion,
and with seallock too,
Which is the shorter, quoth little John,
you sit in the bath and do,
Here is a Tinker that stands by,
that both shall well my bid.
That Tinker then said little John,
for that which I would see,
and I would to think I could do,
if he should me to see.
But Robin he then with them both
they would the summer time,
That he would he may be no more,
and ever live in peace.
And for the jovial Tinkers part
a hundred pound I give,
In the year to maintain him on,
as long as he hath life.
In that soon he is a merry man,
and a merry man by name,
I never thought that any man
should have made me so afraid.
And if he will be one with us,
we will take all our care,
And whatsoever we do yet,
we shall have less care there.
So the Tinker was content,
down a down, a down,
With them to go along,
hey down, a down, a down,
And with them a part to take,
down, a down, a down,
And so I end my song,
hey down, a down, a down,

Printed for J. Clarke, W. Thackeray, & T. Saffrey.

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Ballads were typically printed on single sheets of paper, often with woodcut illustrations.

The Seven Champions of Christendom (no date)
greatest hits of chivalric romance

Now of the Seven Champions here,
my Purpose is to write;
To shew how they with sword and spear,
put many Foes to flight:

Distressed Ladies to release,
and Captives bound in Chains;
That Christian glory to encrease,
which evermore remains.

First, I give you to understand,
that Great **St. George** by Name,
Was the true Champion of our Land,
and of his Birth and Fame...

EBBA 35493 Houghton Library - Hazlitt
EC65.A100.690v2 1.94-95

<https://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/35493/xml>

The Seven Champions of Christendom:
Being a Compendious History of their Lives and Actions, &c.
To the Tune of the Christian Warriors.



Now of the Seven Champions here,
my Purpose is to write;
To shew how they with sword and spear,
put many Foes to flight;
Distressed Ladies to release,
and Captives bound in Chains;
That Christian glory to encrease,
which evermore remains.

First, I give you to understand,
that Great St. George by Name,
Was the true Champion of our Land,
and of his Birth and Fame...

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my Purpose is to write;
To shew how they with sword and spear,
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To shew how they with sword and spear,
put many Foes to flight;
Distressed Ladies to release,
and Captives bound in Chains;
That Christian glory to encrease,
which evermore remains.

First, I give you to understand,
that Great St. George by Name,
Was the true Champion of our Land,
and of his Birth and Fame...

The Male and Female Husband (late 1600s): an intersex character

EBBA ID: 33456 National Library of Scotland - Crawford 257

<https://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/33456/xml>

To the Tune of, *What shall I do, shall I dye for Love, &c.*

The Male and Female Husband ;

OR,

A Strange and Wonderful Relation how a Midwife living at St. Albans, being brought to Bed of an Hermaphrodite, brought it up in Womens Apparel, and carryed it with her as her Deputy to be assisting at the Labours of several Women, going under the Name of Mary Jewit : And how at last a discovery of it was made by its Lying with a maid, and getting her with-Child, whom the said Hermaphrodite was thereupon obliged to marry : With a particular account of the Trades and Employments it was put to during its Minority. With several pleasant passages that happened.

To the Tune of, *What shall I do, shall I dye for Love, &c.*



Come listen all unto my Song,
for why it is most true ;
The like whereof you seldom heard,
or yet but rarely knew :
A Midwife in St. Albans I beg,
whose name I shall not cite :
For some Years past, he's brought to
of an Hermaphrodite. (Bed

Which he in Female habit dress,
that it might not be known ;
And so for many Years none knew
but it that Sex did own :
For why as it grew up in Years,
it with her oft did go
To womens labours, that her skill
she might unto it show.

And let it oft with women lye,
who knew not that it boie
Of either Sex a signal mark,
and had each thing in store :
And oft with Maids it us'd to be,
but long time did refrain
From the kind seats of Venus sport,
for fear they should complain.

A Females name indeed it had,
and Mary Jewit call'd,
And so for many Years was thought,
ere it could be unthral'd :
But at the last being lusty grown,
when as the Mother went
To lay a Woman, with the Maid
in Bed some nights it spent.

And it's Male instruments to us'd,
the wench prov'd great with child,
When being tar'd who got the same,
she bludy'd, and answered mild,
The feigned Female that did come
with Mother-Monight, why
Because he had Male-parts as well
as Female 'twixt the Thighs.

And that it being lusty grown,
surpris'd her in her sleep,
She nothing dreaming of the thing,
it 'twixt her Legs did creep :
Which on a sudden waking, she
shocks and Starts with fear ;
But all in vain, for it was fast
lock'd in her Virgin-geer.

And after that some other Rights
they did both sport and play ;
The wench being familiar grown,
said not the Honster nap ;
But in short time she's big with-child
by this both-Sex'd thing ;
For which some folks feart her before
a Justice then did bring.

And there she set the Story forth,
which made some women smile,
To think how with a double-Sex
Dame Mon-night did beguile :
Whilst others bludy'd to think how it
Natures great Business saw :

Which to the Female-Sex alone ;
is common by their Law.

For would they be at all confine'd
until a search was made :
For why the suppos'd Lads did learn,
long-time a Semplers Trade :
But the good women having searcht
did find each Member good :
And that Rogero 'bove the Cleft,
most firm and stoutly stood.

When on their words the Justice then
did bid them both agree :
for since the wench was got with-child
they both must married be.
To which our Hermaphrodite
did give his free consent :
And changing habit for a man,
he to the Church straight went.

Having since learn'd the Gentle-craft
though Craft he had before,
And could the seats of either Sex
perform and keep in store.
But now to London they are come,
as many does suspect :
There to set up a wicked Trade,
and Hobely neglect.

FINIS.

Printed for P. Bressler, at the Golden-hall
in West-Smithfield.

St. George, hero
of *FQ* Book 1.

Spenser's
Faerie Queene
(1596)

The same stories
migrated from
elite to popular
genres and back
again: *FQ* was an
attempt to make
(prestigious)
national epic out
of (devalued) folk
materials. The
Faust legend is
another example!



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THE SECOND
BOOKE OF THE
FAERIE QVEENE.

Contayning,
THE LEGEND OF SIR GYON.
OR
Of Temperaunce.

Right well I wote most mighty Soueraine,
That all this famous antique history,
Of some th'abundance of an idle braine
Will iudged be, and painted forgery,
Rather then matter of iust memory,
Sith none, that breatheth liuing aire, does know,
Where is that happy land of Faery,
Which I so much do vauunt, yet no where show,
But vouch antiquities, which nobody can know.

But let that man with better fence aduize,
That of the world leaft part to vs is red:
And dayly how through hardy enterprize,
Many great Regions are discouered,

Ballad meter: what is it?

1. 4 line stanzas (aka quatrains);
2. Alternating rhyme pattern (abba);
3. Iambic meter (weak/**strong**);
4. Alternating tetrameter (8 syllable) and trimeter (6 syllable) lines.

quod: archaic verb meaning "said"

Where dost thou live quod Robin Hood,
I pray thee now me tell,
Sad news I hear there is abroad,
I fear all is not well.

(from "A New Song... between Robin Hood and the jovial Tinker")

Where	dost	Thou	live	quod	Ro	bin	Hood
I	pray	thee	now	me	tell		
Sad	news	I	hear	there	is	a	broad
I	fear	all	is	not	well		

Two versions of a Wordsworth poem in ballad meter

Draft included in a letter to Coleridge
(December 1798 or January 1799)

My hope was one, from cities far
Nursed on a lonesome heath:
Her lips were red as roses are,
Her hair a woodbine wreath. woodbine: yellow flower

She lived among the untrodden ways
Beside the springs of Dove, Dove: river in England
A maid whom there were none to praise,
And very few to love;

A violet by a mossy stone
Half-hidden from the eye!
Fair as a star when only one
Is shining in the sky!

And she was graceful as the broom broom: flowering shrub
That flowers by Carron's side; Carron: river
But slow distemper checked her bloom,
And on the Heath she died. disease halted her flowering

Long time before her head lay low
Dead to the world was she:
But now she's in her grave, and Oh!
The difference to me!

Final version
(*Lyrical Ballads*, 1800)

She dwelt among the untrodden ways
Beside the springs of Dove
A Maid whom there were none to praise
And very few to love:

A violet by a mossy stone
Half hidden from the eye!
--Fair as a star, when only one
Is shining in the sky.

She lived unknown, and few could know
When Lucy ceased to be;
But she is in her grave, and, oh,
The difference to me!

*This is the one we'll
talk about!*



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F18

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21L.004 Reading Poetry
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