



MEASURE NO MARK



Ben Turner

He had now been in this way for several years; and began to wish that he could change his way of living for a quiet dwelling in the village where he was born. While he had thoughts of this sort, one time when he took many rich prizes, he resolved to make a present to the queen. The name of the queen was Eleanor; she was the mother of Richard the First, who had great power in her son's reign. Eleanor was very much pleased with Robin present, and said to herself, If I live one year to an end, I will be a friend to thee, and all thy men.

Soon after this, Richard made a grand match in his court, of all the bowmen of his guards and his army. Eleanor thought this a good time to do what she had in her mind; so she called her favourite page, whose name was Richard Partington, and gave him his errand. The page set out straight to the Forest; and when he came to Robin, he said: "Eleanor greets you well; she bids you post to London, where there is to be a match at the cross-bow, and she has chosen you and your men to be her champions."

On the day of this great match, the bowmen, who were thought the best archers in all England, were ranged on one side. After a time, the queen's champions came in, and were ranged on the other side; they were all strangers, and no man in the court knew any of them. Richard then declared what the prize was that should be bestowed upon the conquerors, and the lords of the court began to make bets upon the venture. The bets were three to one in favour of the king's men. "Is there no knight of the privy council," said Eleanor, "who will venture his money on my side? Come hither to me, Sir Robert Lee, thou art a knight of high descent." Sir Robert Lee begged the queen to excuse him from such a trial. "Come hither to me, thou Bishop of Hereford," said Eleanor, "for thou art a noble priest." Now this bishop was Robin old foe. "By my silver mitre," said the bishop, "I will not bet a penny." "If thou wilt not bet on the queen's side," said Robin, "what wilt thou bet on the king's?" "On the king's side," said the bishop, "I will venture all the money in my purse." "Throw thy purse on the ground," said Robin, "and let us see what it contains." It was a hundred pounds. Robin took a bag of the same value from his side, and threw it upon the green.

When the match was just going to begin, Eleanor fell upon her knees to the king her son. "A boon! a boon!" said she, "I must ask a boon of thee before the trial begins." "What is it?" said Richard. "Why," replied the queen, "that you will not be angry with any of those that are of my party; and that they shall be free to stay in our court all the days of the match, and shall then have forty days to retire when they like." The king agreed to this. When the keepers of the course were marking out the distance from which they should shoot at the butt, their captain cried out, like a bold boaster as he was, "Measure no mark for us, we will shoot at the sun and the moon." But he was mistaken; for Robin and his party cleft with their arrows every wand and stick that was set up, and won all the money. Said the Bishop of Hereford, "I know very well now who these fellows are; they are Robin and his gang." The king replied, "If I had known that, I would not have granted them leave to depart; but I cannot break my word." Saying this, Richard ordered a noble feast for Robin and his yeomanry; and then sent them away with honour.

Richard often thought upon what he had seen of Robin and his fellows. He was very fond of archery; he had heard of many generous actions that were told about them, and he admired their gallant spirit and manners. Thought he, If I could but make these men my faithful subjects, what a pride they would be to my court! The king at last fixed upon a plan by which he might see Robin once more.

He called twelve lords of his court, and told his plan to them; and then he and his lords all dressed themselves like so many monks, and away they rode to Forest. Robin saw them at a distance, as they were coming, and resolved to rob them. The king was taller than the rest, and Robin judged that he was the abbot; so he took the king's horse by the bridle, and said, "Abbot. I bid you stand: it was a priest that first worked my ruin, and I have sworn to spare none of his fellows." "But we are going on a message from the king," said Richard. Robin then let go the bridle, and said, "God save the king! and confound all his foes!" "Thou cursest thyself," said Richard, "for thou art a robber, an outlaw, and a traitor." "If you were not his servant," said the other, "I should say, You lie; for I never yet hurt man that was honest and true, but only those who give their minds to live upon other

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Winner of The Sunday Times best book ever, Shortlisted for the Kerry group Irish novel of the year 2018, Shortlisted for the Rathbones folio prize 2018, Longlisted for the Desmond Elliott prize 2018, New York Times best-sellers, Sunday Times, Observer and Telegraph book of the year.



Ben Turner is a writer, researcher, and filmmaker who studies the role of human behavior in business, health, and well-being. In addition to his work as a researcher, writer, and speaker, Tom serves as a senior scientist for and advisor to UN, where he previously spent eleven years leading the organization's work on employee engagement, strengths, leadership, and well-being. He is also a scientific advisor to Usips, a startup focused on wearable technology.



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