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The Black Arrow

Robert Louis **Stevenson**



Retold by **George Gibson**

Activities by **Stuart Cochrane**

Illustrated by **Alfredo Belli**

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CHAPTER ONE

The Letter

T

he bell of Moat House Castle at Tunstall rang loudly one spring afternoon. The people of the village looked up at the castle.

‘What’s happening?’ asked one man.

‘I don’t know,’ said another. ‘A messenger brought a letter for Sir Oliver Oates, the priest, half an hour ago. It was from Sir Daniel Brackley.’

‘But why is the bell ringing?’ asked an old man.

Suddenly a handsome ¹ young man appeared on his grey horse. He was about eighteen years old and had brown hair and blue eyes. He had a bow and arrow on his back. His name was Richard Shelton and he was Sir Daniel’s ward. ²

Richard Shelton looked at the people around him and said, ‘There will be a big battle soon! Sir Daniel wants everyone to fight.’

‘Another battle!’ cried an angry woman. ‘This is terrible! Our men go and die in battles, and their wives and children are hungry.’

‘We pay high taxes to Sir Daniel and we don’t have any money for food,’ said a young mother with three small children.

‘Who is Sir Daniel fighting for today?’ asked a tall man. ‘Lancaster or York?’

‘I’m sorry, I don’t know,’ said Richard, and his face became red.

1. **handsome** : good-looking, attractive (used for men).

2. **ward** : a child who is under the protection of an adult because his parents are dead.



Sir Daniel Brackley was not a loyal man and the people did not like him. He seemed to always change his mind: ¹ sometimes he fought for Lancaster and sometimes he fought for York.

A big man on a black horse appeared. It was Bennet Hatch, Sir Daniel's best friend. He was about forty and had dark hair and an unfriendly face.

'All of the men in the village must go to Moat House Castle and get ready for the battle!' Hatch cried.

Then Hatch looked at Richard and said, 'Let's go to Nick Appleyard's house.'

When they arrived Hatch said, 'Nick Appleyard, you must go and defend Moat House Castle because Sir Daniel is going to Kettley to fight.'

While the two men were talking, a black arrow suddenly hit Nick Appleyard in the back and killed him.

'Oh, no!' cried Richard. 'Appleyard is dead! Someone in the forest shot this black arrow.'

'Look! There's a message on the arrow,' said Hatch. 'What does it say, Richard?'

Richard took the arrow and read, "*For Appleyard, from John, to make things right.*" What a strange message!

'It's dangerous here, let's go to the church,' said Hatch.

There were about twenty men on their horses outside the church. They were ready to fight.

'Sir Daniel will be pleased with these brave men,' said Hatch.

'Look at the church door,' said Richard. 'There's a letter on it!'

'A letter on the church door,' said Sir Oliver, surprised. He was the priest of the village and Sir Daniel's good friend. 'Young Richard, please read it.'

1. **mind** : (here) opinions.

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Richard took the letter off the door and read it aloud.

*I have four black arrows.
The first arrow killed Appleyard,
the next one will kill Bennet Hatch,
because he burnt Grimstone House.
Another arrow is for Sir Oliver Oates,
because he killed Sir Harry Shelton.
Sir Daniel will get the fourth arrow.
From John of the Green Wood and his men.
P.S. Remember we have other arrows for your men!*

‘We live in a terrible world! I’m a good man. I did not kill Sir Harry Shelton!’ cried Sir Oliver Oates.

‘We know you’re a good, honest man, Sir Oliver,’ said Hatch. Then he whispered something in Sir Oliver’s ear and looked at Richard. Sir Harry Shelton was Richard’s father. Richard saw this but he said nothing.

‘I must write a letter to Sir Daniel and tell him what happened,’ said Sir Oliver.

When the letter was ready he said, ‘Richard, take this important letter to Sir Daniel immediately. Be careful on the road because it can be very dangerous.’

Richard took the letter and went to get his horse.

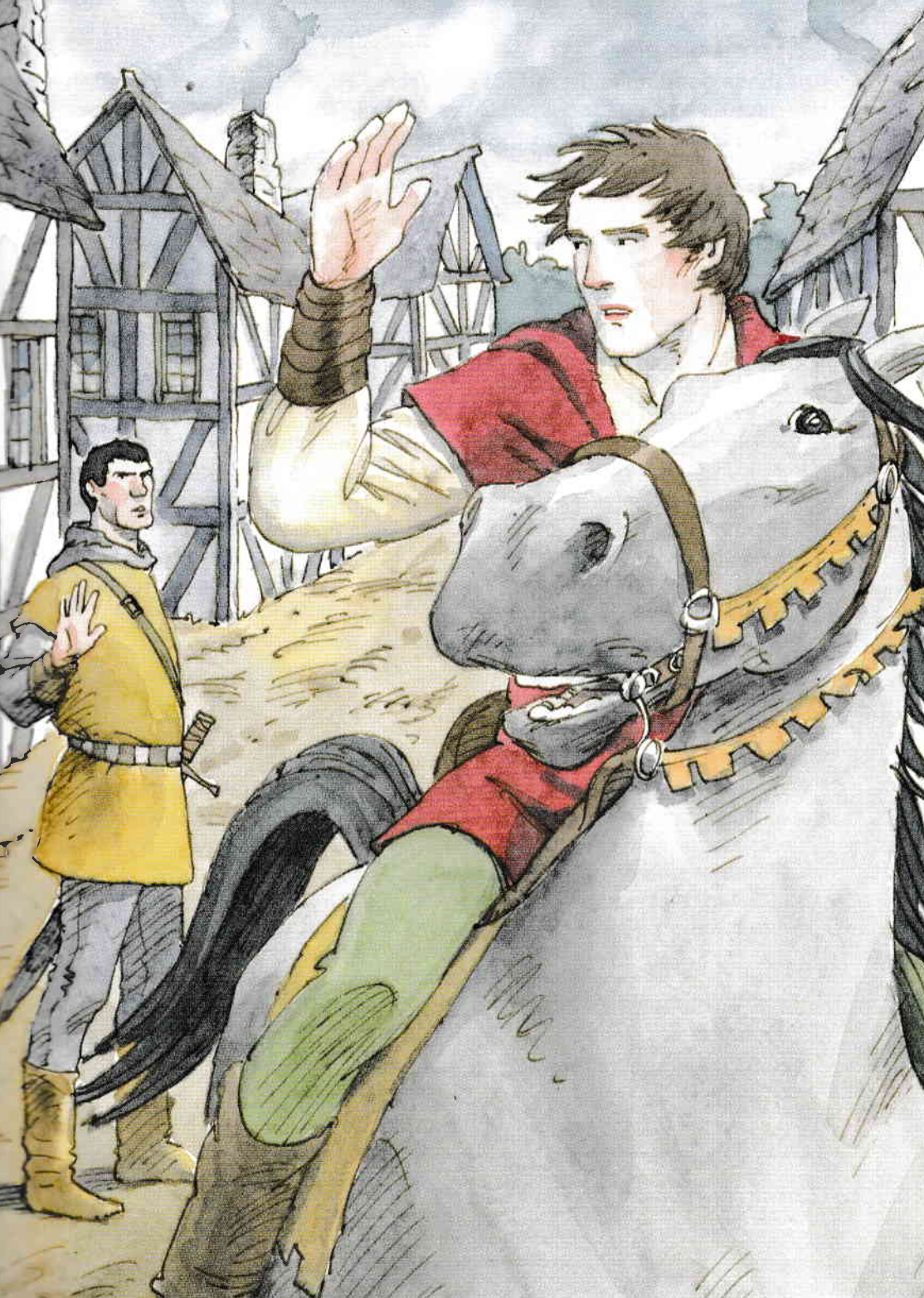
Hatch followed him. ‘Richard,’ he said quietly, ‘you’re a brave, honest young man. Listen to me, be careful of Sir Daniel. Don’t trust him and don’t trust Sir Oliver. They’re dangerous men.’

Richard was surprised and started thinking. ‘Thank you, my friend,’ he said. Then he got on his grey horse and galloped¹ away.

1. galloped : moved on his horse very quickly.

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UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

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1 COMPREHENSION CHECK

Are these sentences 'Right' (A) or 'Wrong' (B)? If there is not enough information to answer 'Right' (A) or 'Wrong' (B), choose 'Doesn't say' (C). There is an example at the beginning (0).

- 0 The bell is ringing because there will be a big battle soon.
☒ A Right ☐ B Wrong ☐ C Doesn't say
- 1 Richard likes Sir Daniel.
☐ A Right ☐ B Wrong ☐ C Doesn't say
- 2 The people in the village are poor and unhappy.
☐ A Right ☐ B Wrong ☐ C Doesn't say
- 3 The women of the village don't want any more battles.
☐ A Right ☐ B Wrong ☐ C Doesn't say
- 4 Sir Daniel fights for the house of Lancaster.
☐ A Right ☐ B Wrong ☐ C Doesn't say
- 5 Nick Appleyard must go to Kettley to fight with Sir Daniel.
☐ A Right ☐ B Wrong ☐ C Doesn't say
- 6 Bennet Hatch kills Nick Appleyard.
☐ A Right ☐ B Wrong ☐ C Doesn't say
- 7 John of the Green Wood is an enemy of Sir Daniel and his friends.
☐ A Right ☐ B Wrong ☐ C Doesn't say
- 8 Sir Oliver Oates killed Richard's father, Sir Harry Shelton.
☐ A Right ☐ B Wrong ☐ C Doesn't say

KET

2 VOCABULARY

Find adjectives for people and feelings in Chapter One that match these descriptions. The first letter is already there.

- 1 good-looking, but for a man h _ _ _ _ _
- 2 in a very bad mood a _ _ _ _
- 3 opposite of friendly u _ _ _ _ _
- 4 not normal s _ _ _ _ _
- 5 someone who's not afraid b _ _ _ _
- 6 someone who tells the truth is... h _ _ _ _
- 7 bad things can happen to you if a person or place is... d _ _ _ _ _
- 8 if something happens, but you do not expect it, you are s _ _ _ _ _