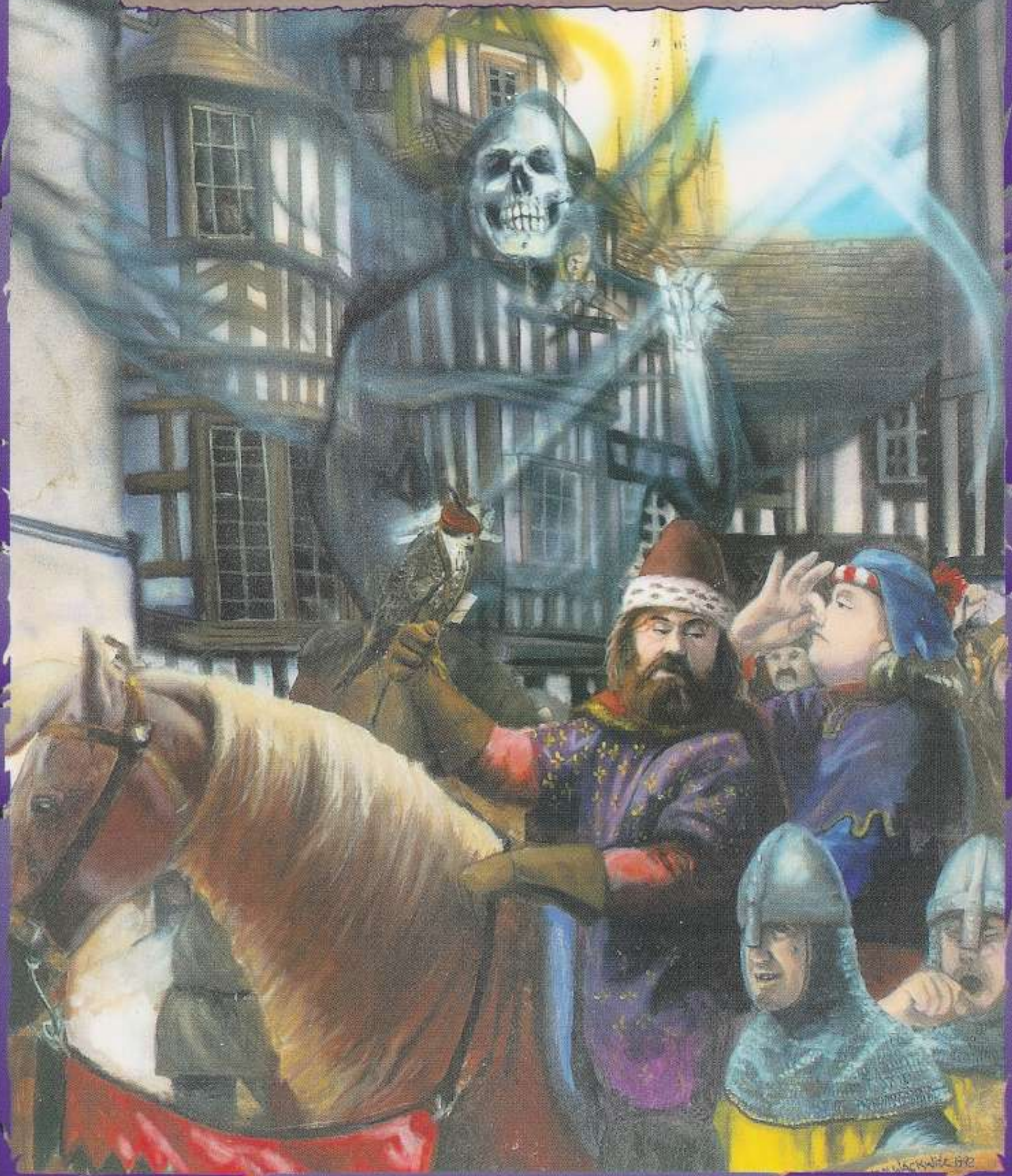


# Medieval Handbook



A Guide to the Realms of Medieval Europe  
for ARS MAGICA™ 3rd Edition





# Medieval Handbook

## Aetas Europa



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### A Short Good-bye

This supplement marks the end of an era, the beginning of a new one and the renewal of an old one. Confused? Don't worry. The *Medieval Handbook* is the last *Ars Magica* book that White Wolf is publishing. The game line is now in the hands of Wizards of the Coast, under the control of Lisa Stevens, former member of White Wolf and Lion Rampart (if you can remember that far back). Everything old is new again. We're sad to see *Ars Magica* go, but we know Wizards will do an excellent job, bringing their own style to the game. Farewell.

*"History, which is, indeed, little more than the register of the crimes, follies and misfortunes of mankind."*

—Edward Gibbon

***Dedicated to Anne Hassall,  
with love and thanks.***

Special thanks to Bill Dawbarn, for permitting the pilage of his book collection. Also to the gullible librarians at Liverpool University (did you actually think a real student could be so industrious?), and Ella Metcalfe for providing "authentic" student back-up.

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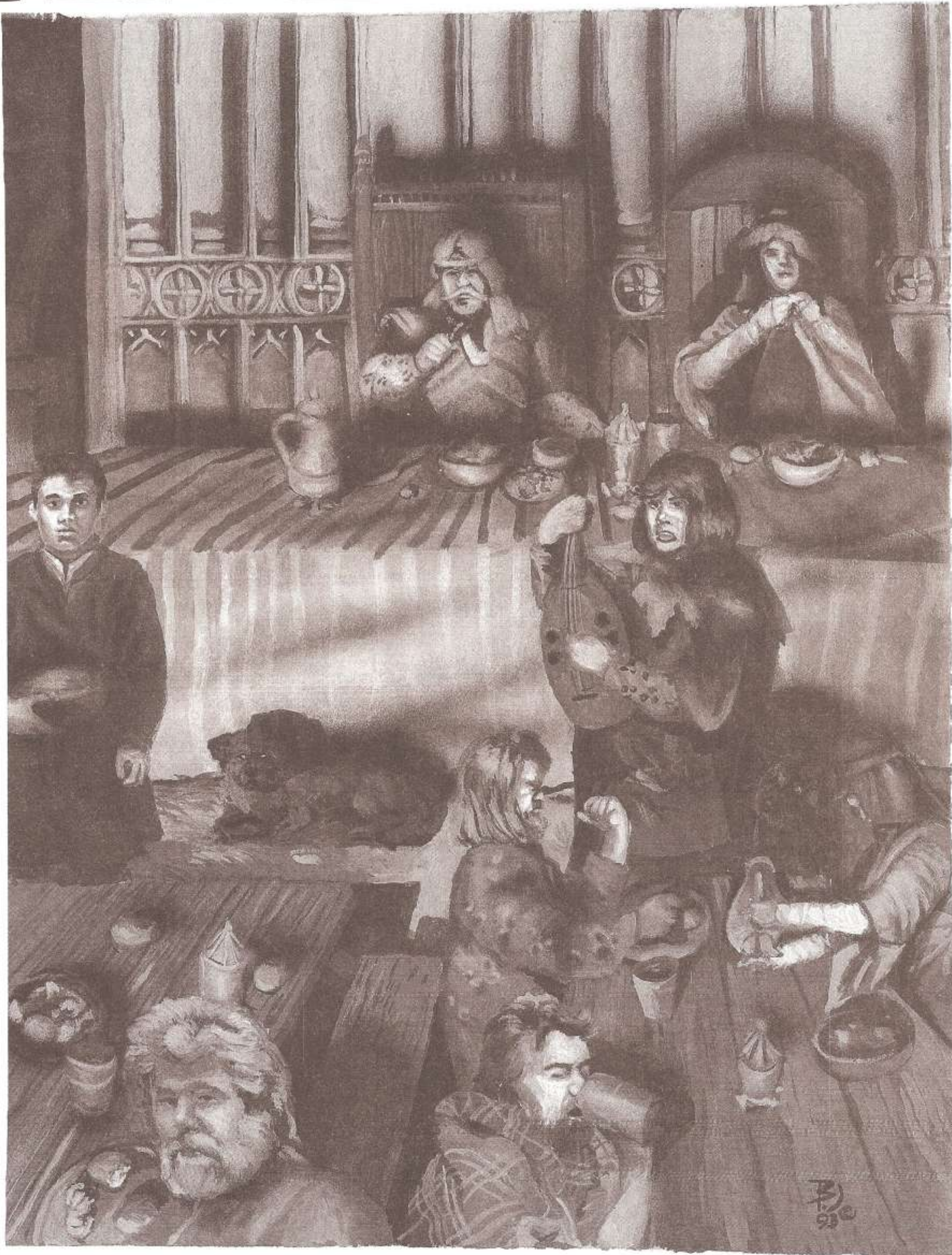




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# EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

## THE PROBLEM WITH HISTORY

Seven hundred years from now, perhaps someone will base a fantasy roleplaying game in the 20th century. If they do, they'll have plenty of source material. They'll be able to scour our videos and records, photographs and movies, our diaries, novels, and countless books on sociology, politics and every other subject from drunk-driving to astronauts. But we don't have such sources from the 13th century.

Thirteenth century people wrote books mainly about religion, or "science," and what little fiction they wrote is blatantly idealistic. They have also left us some biographies (which claim to tell of some great person's life, but are usually disguised political tracts), some books on running a noble's or merchant's household or estate, some traveller's journals, and some very patchy accounts. Unfortunately, all of these are of limited use, since they leave out really basic facts that the authors took for granted. They never explain what normal people did from day to day or hour to hour.

For example, who actually lived in a noble's household? Well, we might estimate how much food was bought by an estate by looking at the accounts and trying to work out what quantities might have been bought at the given price. But we cannot know how much of this was fed to animals (as bread sometimes was), or distributed to the

poor, or given to harvest-workers, or reserved for occasional guests, or even how much went to waste. Furthermore, we don't know how much additional food was grown by the household itself, nor how much more was given as gifts. Unable to even decide how many people lived in a noble's household, we cannot hope to say exactly who they were.

Archaeology provides us with a few clues. From burial sites we might estimate the number of people living in each community, and pathologists can determine their age and suggest life expectancy. (Most villages averaged 50 to 300 people, depending upon geography and date. The average life span was a mere 20 years, including infant mortality, while adults lived to about 40 if they were poor or 60 if they were wealthy.) Equally, the basic plan of houses and villages might be inferred from archaeology (although experts still argue on this), and durable artifacts do turn up in digs.

In certain cases we can look at later traditions and sources, hoping that some techniques might have endured from earlier times. For example, herbs found in 15th century cookbooks may well have been used in the 13th century.

Still, although we cannot know for certain what people did and how they lived, we can at least make an informed guess. We can take all the little pieces of information to create a partial picture, filling in the gaps with our own imagination.



So if we return to the problem of food consumption, we can develop a colorful and largely accurate picture of what medieval people really ate. Looking at accounts and records, physical remains, travellers' journals, later manuals of courtesy, records of food gifts, and other sources, we might conjure an image of a royal banquet or of a peasant's snack-lunch. Indeed, you will find descriptions of both later in this book.

In reality this kind of guesswork is what social historians do all the time — and we can surely be forgiven for doing the same. After all, we are not even historians, just storytellers and roleplayers, and our objective is to have fun.

## THE AUTHOR AS EDITOR

It may seem strange to call this the "Editor's Introduction" since this book was not written by a genuine medieval monk but by a 20th century writer.

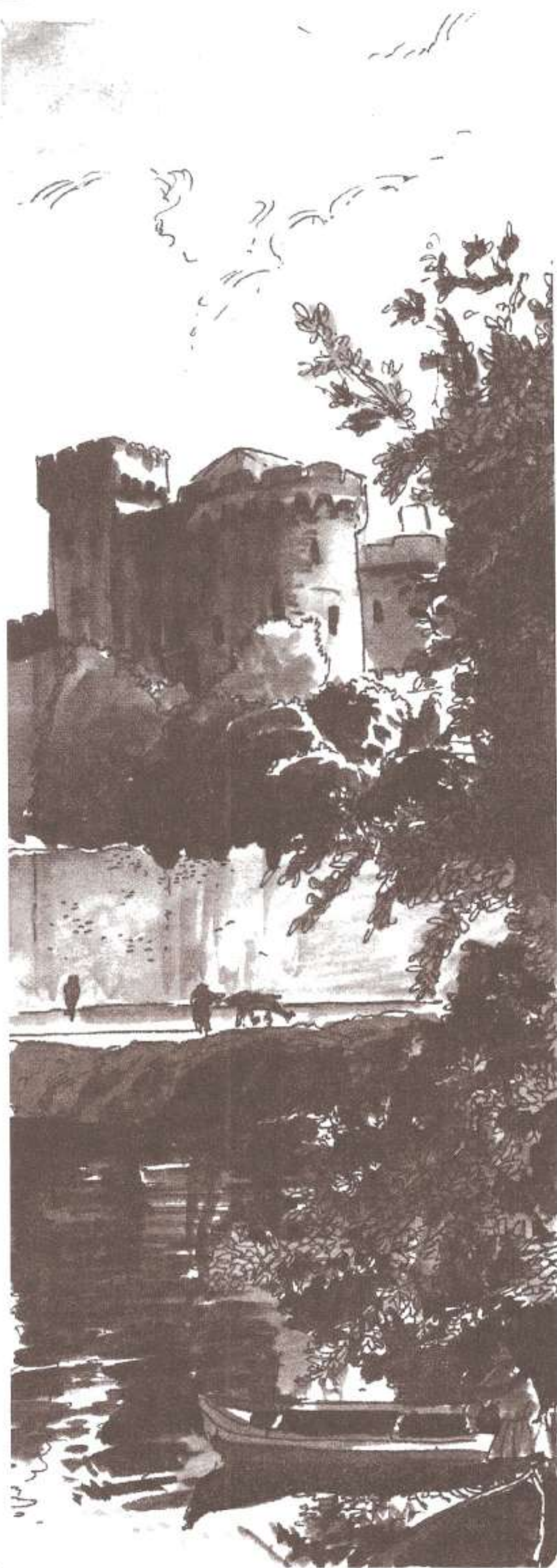
However, there is very little "original" material in this work. In writing it my job has been to reorganize information, condensing medieval writings and modern academics' books into a short set of essays for roleplayers. In this respect I have been an editor as much as an author.

Whole sections of text, particularly some "letters," are copies or paraphrases of authentic medieval texts. So, for example, a letter presented here that's from an archbishop, and concerns Jews, is actually an abridged version of a medieval Papal Bull. Similarly, many of the incidents mentioned here, such as a discussion of an abbot's illness, are drawn from early sources, in this case a written exchange between an abbot of Cluny and an Italian Physicus. Wherever possible, even the smallest details — a necromancer's invocation, the dishes served at meals, a wise-woman's remedies — are taken or reconstructed from original sources.

## THROUGH MEDIEVAL EYES

As much as possible, the narrators of this book are "authentic medieval people." That is to say that unlike people in most "historical fiction," they do not think like you and I. For them the existence of God is not a question, but a certainty, and their "science" has "proved" that eels are born from horses' hairs, just as surely as our science "proves" that the earth orbits the sun.

Most importantly, the medieval narrators do not believe in rational science or discovery, freedom, justice or equality in the way that we do. They are certain that women are inferior to men, that Jews are all but subhuman, and that slavery is not only acceptable but divinely inspired. They do not believe in social mobility or opportunity, and have no concept of natural rights.





They believe in divine revelation, clear hierarchies and unchangeable superiorities. They believe that groups can be punished for the actions of individual members, and that peoples' places are defined by their parents' ranks. Status is not dependent upon what a man earns, but on what he can afford to give away. And instead of worrying over peoples' rights, this tome's medieval narrators and their kind argue about their obligations.

In many ways, medieval people seem quite reprehensible. In our age of supposed equality and opportunity, still within living memory of the Holocaust, their sexist, exploitative and anti-Semitic attitudes can easily repel us. However, it is precisely because these people are different to us that their world is so different and therefore so interesting. If they were just like us, they would have made their world just as we make ours — which would make it a particularly dull setting in which to roleplay.

## STYLE AND VOCABULARY

Reading through this book, you may find a number of terms which seem strange or unfamiliar. Unfortunately, it has been necessary to include these terms, because they have no modern equivalents, but you'll soon get used to them.

Because medieval people thought differently from us, their language was different, too. They needed words to express concepts which we no longer need to understand, and many of our ideas could not be sensibly expressed in a medieval vocabulary.

For example, a peasant would not refer to "my lands" or "the lands I rent," but "my holding." A peasant never owned his own land, but "held" it from the local lord. The noble was obliged to let the peasant work the land, and the peasant was obliged to pay rent and taxes and to perform other duties in return. A free peasant could sell the land or pass it on to his heirs, and although the lord could not demand the land back at whim, the peasant was still aware that the land was not really his own. Even the lords did not really own their lands (although they might have talked as if they did) as they "held" their estates from the monarch. And even monarchs theoretically acknowledged that they "held" land by the grace of God.

Although medieval-style terminology is used here, this book is not written in a particularly medieval style. In places, elements of medieval literary style have been incorporated (semi-colons are frequently used, for example), but real medieval prose is often difficult to follow. Use of extremely long and complicated sentences in this book seemed pointless, serving only to confuse modern readers. So, where the subject matter of this book is certainly medieval in nature, its presentation is of a modern style.

## A Brief Glossary

The terms used in this book are undoubtedly familiar to readers, but a few may seem strange or may carry different meanings from modern equivalents.

**Confession:** A rite of the Church. A man who confesses a sin to a priest is immediately considered forgiven of that sin, but the priest imposes a penance which the confessor must perform to secure forgiveness in the long run.

**Church:** A church (with a small "c") is a place dedicated to God and where Mass is celebrated. The Church (large "C") is the institution. The Church is not a community of believers, nor merely a political structure, but a sacred institution. In Western Europe, it was not considered possible to be a true Christian if you were cast out from or argued with the Church.

**Cleric or Clerk:** A man (always a man) formally admitted into the Church. Usually designating a man who is not a full priest.

**Excommunication:** A formal cutting off from the Church. The subject could not take Mass or make Confession. Bishops could excommunicate, but important magnates were only excommunicated by the Pope. Whole towns were often excommunicated *en masse* if their rulers angered the Pope.

**Freeman:** A peasant who is not considered the property of any lord, and may theoretically move about as he pleases.

**Holding:** The lands "held" by a peasant on an indefinite lease.

**Holiday:** A day when work is actually forbidden, literally a "holy day." All officially recognized holidays honor Christian Saints or events in Jesus' life, though unofficial (and originally pagan) holidays still persisted.

**Householder:** The "head" of a household, almost invariably a man, typically held partially responsible for the actions of the household's members — his wife, children, and servants.

**Mass:** The holiest rite of the Church. (Today Protestants call it Communion.) A complicated ritual, performed in Latin and usually lasting nearly two hours.

**Saint:** A man (or sometimes a woman) renowned for his or her piety and goodness, either recognized by the Church or occupying a particular place in the popular imagination, who is thought to have gone straight to Heaven after death and now has special power to beseech God on behalf of those who pray to him or her.

**Serf:** A peasant "bound" to the land. A virtual slave, obliged to work the lord's lands in perpetuity — unless the lord agrees to give or sell him his freedom.



## USING THIS BOOK

Ultimately, this book is designed for storytellers and roleplayers, not for academics. Its aim is to give an impression of life in the Middle Ages as it may have been, and to supply a wealth of story ideas and details to implement in your fantasy adventures and Sagas.

This book is not designed to offer a balanced view of medieval life. There is little detail here about farming procedures or craftsmen's methods, regardless of how important they were to medieval folk. What you will find here is a wealth of information covering superstition, death, food, travel, etiquette, relationships between rulers and subjects, the status of individual professions and healing and learning. In other words, subjects covered in the greatest detail are those which are important in most storytelling and roleplaying games.

This book is designed to introduce players and Storyguides alike to medieval life. It may be read straight through as an introduction to the feudal world, or used as an informal reference book, to glean ideas and details. Specific descriptions and incidents portrayed here may also be imported completely into your stories, providing incidental or set-piece encounters.

## THIS BOOK AND ARS MAGICA

This book may be read with one of two goals. It may be regarded as a description of life in *Ars Magica's* Mythic Europe. *Ars Magica* Storyguides and players should find it a perfect companion volume to the *Mythic Europe* book. Indeed, the final chapter deals specifically with the Order of Hermes in the medieval world, and certain incidents in the narrative may seem to smack of Hermetic magic and the Order.

The only aspect of this book which is not completely compatible with *Ars Magica* is its treatment of money: In the *Ars Magica* rulebook the topic is dealt with quickly and concisely, ignoring much of the confusing diversity which complicated medieval transactions. This book, on the other hand, explains some of the quirks of medieval money and accounting. You may ignore or incorporate this information into your stories as you please, just as you can everything else in this book.

The *Medieval Handbook* can also be read and utilized by players of other fantasy games, to acquire setting information for those games. After all, virtually every fantasy setting is based largely on that of our medieval world, only with bells and whistles added. So information on the business transactions of 12th century France can easily be the model for business in the magical Kingdom of Lutinara. Indeed, even the apparently "Hermetic" incidents men-

tioned in the narrative are drawn from authentic medieval sources, such as court documents and "real" magical grimoires, so may also be adapted to the unique magical nature of your fantasy game's world. So, apart from the final chapter, everything in this book may be applied to your own fantasy campaign.

## FURTHER READING

*Life in a Medieval City*, by Joseph and Frances Gies (published by Crowell, New York 1969), is an outstanding (but out of print) survey of medieval town life, skating over topics from childbirth to funerals, education to games, shopping to town government.

Margaret Wade Labarge has written several excellent books describing different aspects of the daily lives of medieval nobles.

*Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages* (Christopher Dyer, published by Cambridge University Press) provides exhaustive detail concerning the food, drink, housing, income and expenditure of all classes of medieval Englishmen.

*An Economic History of Medieval Europe* (N.J.G. Pounds, published by Longman) is a standard University textbook dealing with trade and economics throughout the period, great for information on banking systems and so forth, but rather lacking in human detail.

*Food and Cooking in Medieval Britain* (Maggie Black, published by English Heritage) provides concise detailed accounts of medieval food and eating habits, including recipes, but the book may be hard to obtain.

*Religion in the Medieval West* (Bernard Hamilton, published by Edward Arnold) gives a definitive overview of medieval Catholic belief and practice.

*Magic in the Middle Ages* (Richard Kieckhefer, published by Cambridge University Press) deals with necromancy, astrology and folk-magic.

*Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine* (Nancy Siraisi, published by the University of Chicago Press) may seem a rather specialized text, but its treatment of surgery and general health-care makes it ideal for players with characters who are physicians, and for Storyguides whose Sagas involve a lot of bloodshed.

Of all the books used as sources for this supplement, these few are perhaps the most comprehensive and easy to read. Still, anthologies of medieval texts, translations of bestiaries, dictionaries of saints and superstitions, books of old European folk tales and innumerable modern history books can be found scattered throughout university and public libraries, museum gift shops, and new and second-hand bookstores. These few selected titles are simply recommended starting points for players and Storyguides who wish to further explore the medieval world.





## n Introduction

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The following Gatherings were set down in the weeks following the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the year of Our Lord Eleven Hundred and Ninety Six.

The three longest gatherings tell of three journeys undertaken in the years preceding this, from which it is hoped readers might learn a little of the world about us. Very many monks, having known only their home village or father's household before becoming novices, are ill-equipped for the journeys which they may be called upon to make: With God's grace these pages may prepare them for such forays.

Interspersed amongst these journals are three shorter gatherings. These deal directly and plainly with the practical details of travel, the customs which might be encountered amongst the peasantry at different times of the year, and with the etiquette of life in towns and cities — all of which often confuse those who have spent their lives enclosed in our communities.

I have written this book not because I felt I had any great understanding or gift with language, but because it seemed necessary to write such a manual; I felt my recollections might be of help to others. With God's grace this project has not been in vain, and I have not wasted time which could have been more profitably spent in prayer.

Through my childhood and early adulthood I travelled with my father — a merchant — from our home in Frankfurt. We passed through Flanders and thence to the English Fairs, sometimes to the great ports of Lombardy, and occasionally even as far as Iceland, where in my youth a mountain split to reveal a burning gateway to hell. In these years, and in the journeys I have undertaken since pledging my life to Christ, I have come to understand something of the ways of the world. I pray God that my impressions and memories preserve rather than distort the truth.

Outside, dusk falls. On the hill the local peasants light a bonfire to mourn the old year and warm the way for spring. The bell has rung for Compline, and my fingers are numb.

Explicit, Deo Gratias

Peter of Aalen









your own dear son: Now that you leave the manor for Paris, and will be gone for some time, I feel that I should give you some practical advice concerning the way in which you should conduct yourself. I am sure I have said all of this before, yet you may profit from having my counsel in writing, so that you may carry it and consult it whenever you wish.

First concerning journeys, make certain that your horse has fine trappings and always ride erect; move aside from the narrow road if a lord or pilgrim should wish to pass, and if a rude peasant should not make way for you, bear the insult with gentility; break your journey at a noble's house or monastery, and if you must take lodgings in an inn be sure that you share a room only with other gentlemen or clergy.

Regard as models of deportment the figures which you see in the churches, and the images of saints and apostles, and hold firm to virtue. Do not be a fornicator, robber or false merchant, do not play at games and drink only in moderation.

Although you are a student, and of noble birth, if you have poor manners you may as well be a ditch-digger. Therefore, abstain from the seven coarsenesses noted by Thales the sage: light-minded chatter at the table, presumption, constant argument, cruelty to the poor, haughtiness toward your friends, rejection of wise counsel, and above all impiety.

Likewise, be sincere at prayer and regular at your devotions, and practice freely all proper works of mercy: feed the hungry and give drink to those who thirst, shelter the poor, clothe the needy, console the sick, and see to the proper treatment of the dead. Yet never let the poor take advantage of your noble generosity, and do not do those things which are beneath your station; always have lesser fellows perform demeaning chores.

While dining at another's table do not eat like the glutton, who devours his food like a mule or weevil, but rather pause over your cup and eat in moderate mouthfuls. Do not wipe your hands upon the table cloth, nor wipe your mouth upon your sleeve, nor carelessly spit food across the table. Hold the base of your goblet so that unsightly finger marks are not left on the bowl of the cup. Do not take more food from the service platter than is your share, and allow those of higher standing to take their portions first.

When you entertain guests you must follow these same rules. Also be certain that servants stand nearby with towels, so that diners may wipe their hands and chins as they wish. Always carve the meat while it is hot, have plenty of bread served, and ensure that the head of the table is served first.

A man who takes a brief sleep after each meal does so for the sake of his health. Likewise, you should eat and drink those things which preserve the balance of your humors and thus preserve your good health. Medicines should not be taken excessively, as they so often are, but a little nutmeg should be taken each day, and likewise cloves, musk and fennel, for these things expel gas from the stomach and comfort the head. Stewed prunes from Damascus, with a little Diaprunis, always cures fevers, and cooked pears may also provide relief. Sweet wine grants wonderful ease from indigestion.

Take care of your horse and servants, and be prudent in all things. Make regular confessions, avoid sin, and pray earnestly. Be diligent in your studies, and keep me informed of your progress.



# ADVICE TO TRAVELERS

## CHAPTER ONE

### Navigation and Companions

Before setting out in the morning, it may be necessary to hire a guide or seek information concerning the route. Well-used roads are easy enough to follow, and magnates always ensure that bridges are in good repair, but away from major trade routes navigation can become a nightmare. Paths wind and double back on themselves, become blocked or simply peter out; fords become impassable during thaws and storms; bridges collapse or become rickety from lack of care; outlaws infest lawless back-routes.

Local merchants may provide information concerning fords, bridges and bandits, but a local man or boy — a pedlar, minor merchant or peasant — may be necessary as a guide through the labyrinths which cross woods and moorlands. In areas where dialects may change dramatically, or immigrant settlers may speak unusual languages, a translator may also be useful.

Important dignitaries are often presented with guides and translators — servants instructed to lead the entourage to its next rest and then return — by the nobles with whom they stay, but common travelers (merchants, pilgrims and monks) must recruit their own guides.

Travelers may also wish to travel in groups, for company and mutual protection. In certain areas companionship is more important, but in others travel is a hazardous endeavor, and an unarmed man is very foolish to travel alone. Regions such as Burgundy, Flanders, the Po Valley and southeast England have some safe roads, with strong local authorities and numerous settlements. Conversely, sparsely populated areas, forests or places with weak lords may be very dangerous (eastern Germany and north England, Wales and Hungary).

Groups of travelers should always wait for stragglers (who may be victimized by bandits), and should be prudent in their choice of route. They should also be careful that they can trust each other, as a devious band of outlaws may have one of its number infiltrate a group, and lone thieves may pose as innocent travelers in order to get close to targets.

### Conducting Journeys

Travelers should rise with the dawn and take a light breakfast. If staying at a monastery or near to a Cathedral, they should hear Mass. (Pious travelers may also ask noble hosts whether a chaplain is available to conduct worship, and for a small donation may persuade a village priest to lead a Mass. Monks and priests should be careful, however, not to insult a priest or chaplain by performing their own Mass on his altar without first asking permission.)



About three hours should pass before lunch, which should be an ample meal, eaten shortly before noon. After this another four hours travel is ideal, with breaks as necessary to rest tired feet and limbs. Thus the journey should end at least one hour before dusk, so that accommodation may be found and supper arranged.

In this way a group may cover ten to twenty miles each day if travelers are on foot, slightly less if accompanied by carts and rather more if all are mounted. Tales are told of much more rapid journeys, such as that of the professional messenger who covered the seven hundred miles from Lyon to York in ten days. Part of that journey, however, may have been by sea, and any man who can change horses twice a day (and has a tough posterior) might well cover sixty miles each day.

## Finding Accommodation

Every traveler must find accommodation suitable to his or her station in life.

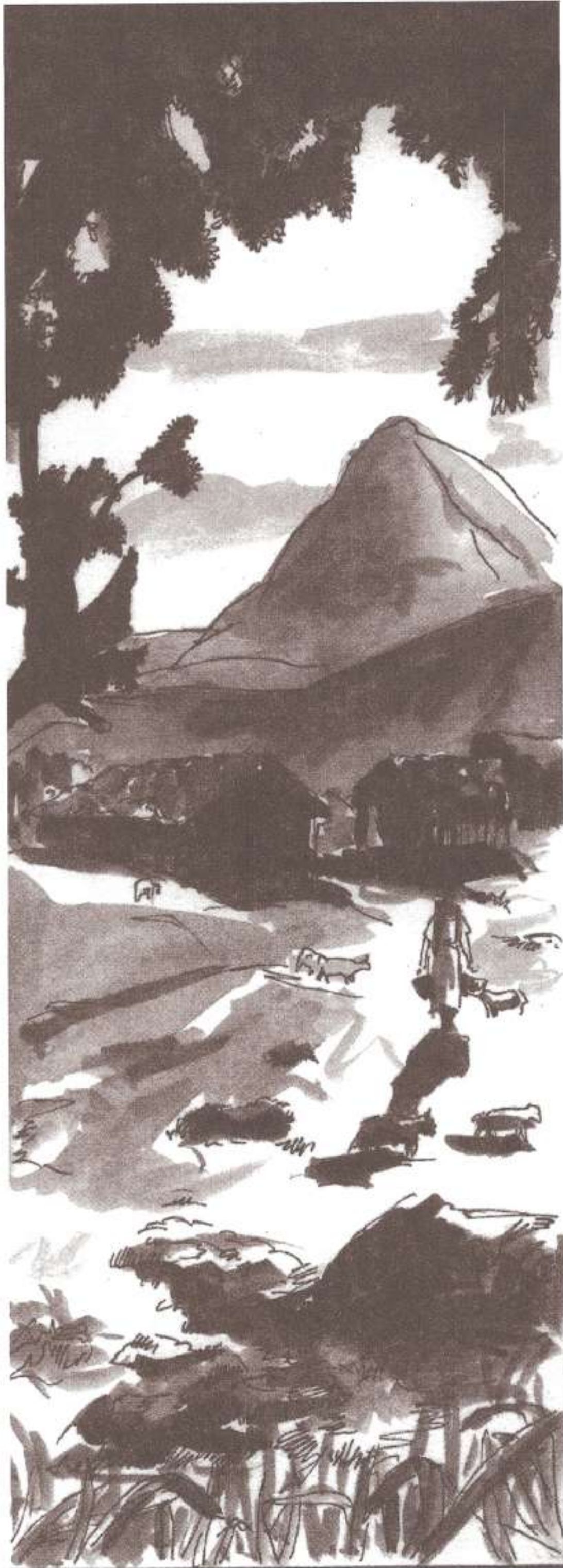
Monks are always well-received by monasteries, and large abbeys can accommodate even twenty or thirty people without prior warning. The courts of bishops and great nobles equally welcome traveling brethren, and petty lords usually extend their hospitality to monks and clerics. Only in rural areas or at the roadside might a monk be obliged to seek shelter with a parish priest or else pay for lodging in an inn.

Noble travelers might similarly expect to receive hospitality from other nobles. Manor houses and castles often make much show of entertaining notable travelers, although large entourages should send a runner ahead — preferably a day — to give fair warning of the group's approach. Monasteries are also ready to offer hospitality to traveling nobles.

However, monastic houses and small noble residences are often unwilling or unable to entertain large groups of travelers. A noble may therefore wish to accommodate his group in an inn (and great lords sometimes hire entire inns for their retinue), or at least lodge his lesser followers there while he stays at a monastery or castle.

Certain commoners — such as those with university training, lone pilgrims and messengers — may be treated as nobles and given free accommodation with a local lord or religious house. Still, groups of commoners and more lowly individuals are obliged to pay for lodgings at an inn. Merchants, pedlars, traveling laborers, surgeons, farmers going to market and other such people will inevitably have to seek out an Inn.

Inns vary greatly in appearance. Those by roads and in sparsely populated areas are usually a cluster of buildings within a wooden fence, including the main eating and drinking hall, a stable for horses, perhaps a separate barn for





## Procuring Food

A great difficulty when traveling is finding food.

A simple breakfast may easily be obtained wherever one is lodging, whether that is at a monastery, castle, manor or inn, or even with a peasant family. Monasteries and working peasants usually eat hearty breakfasts, since their lunches are so brief, eating pottage or oat porridge, or bread and cheese. Inns provide similar fare, but many nobles eat heartily before traveling, and in order to show the generosity of their hospitality may provide departing guests with embarrassingly generous portions of meat, cheese, fowl and pottage.

Nonetheless, it is wise to eat sparingly before traveling, but to drink a great deal so that it is unnecessary to carry liquid on the journey.

Lunch is usually eaten by the road, as few inns or households expect guests to arrive for the meal. Only in towns and cities are taverns likely to be found serving midday meals.

Food for lunch may be purchased from an innkeeper, at varying prices. Travelers staying in a village can often buy bread, fruit, cheese and meat inexpensively from the peasantry. Any farmer may have such surpluses available to buy, and their wives will be about their chores in the morning after the menfolk have gone into the fields. (However, travelers should not step across the thresh-hold and enter a dwelling if the master of the house is absent, as unseemly gossip and temptations of the flesh may result.)

In towns and cities there are victuallers, who make it their business to sell small quantities of food. These people keep stalls or open the front rooms of their homes to sell food, and may be found in and around market squares and by the main gates of cities. Any common type of food and many novelties and luxuries may be bought from them, and they also sell kegs of wine (around the Mediterranean) or beer or ale (further north). Cooking ingredients, like olive oil, may also be purchased here, by travelers who anticipate having to cook their own meals.

Other food may also be bought from wandering vendors, often part-time salesmen, who can be seen — and heard — selling foodstuffs and other goods. In the morning, when housewives, servants and travelers alike are eager to buy food, they usually congregate on roads where the victuallers sell, loudly proclaiming the quality of their goods. Fruit, eggs, onions and other vegetables, preserved meat, fish and eel, cheese and stuffed pastries may be bought from such fellows. While great bargains may be had in this manner, the goods are sometimes of doubtful quality.

Merchants are not interested in selling paltry quantities of food, often willing to supply food in bulk to large groups of travelers. Those traveling in large bands — say of twenty or more — may wish to seek out a minor merchant in the



merchants' carts (though these may also be stored in the stable or courtyard, or under a makeshift awning), and separate sleeping chambers. Accommodations may be adjoining the eating hall, connected to it by a covered walkway, or even built above it. Urban inns are more compact. In great cities, where many buildings are crammed together, they may combine all of their facilities under one roof, and are often as much as three stories high.

Accommodation in inns is usually had in small dormitories. Each room contains two to four beds, each seven feet by six feet in size and designed to accommodate two to three people. Innkeepers usually charge per bed, so impoverished travelers may save money by sleeping five or six to a bed; picky folk may want a whole bed to themselves. (In some instances, of course, it is worth hiring an entire room, such as if one carries valuables.)

Finally, some inns allow travelers to sleep on the floor of their main hall, sometimes asking only nominal payment. The "common room" attracts the poorest, rudest, roughest and often most dishonest travelers, though. Those sleeping here risk becoming victims of verbal or physical abuse, or even theft.



hopes of saving a farthing or two. Those with expensive tastes must seek out specialist merchants to buy salt, pepper, spices and imported goods.

Butchers and fishmongers are specialist victuallers. They may sell food themselves (particularly on market days) or may simply work to supply other victuallers and fulfill large standing orders from local households. A butcher or fishmonger who does not have a stall outside his shop may not appreciate casual visitors seeking immediate purchases.

Markets are held in most towns and cities once every week, and travelers may find bargains or unusual wares at these meetings. Local market rules can sometimes be confusing (for example, visitors may be forbidden from buying or selling anything before noon), but numerous local farmers compete here to sell their surpluses, and traveling merchants bring goods from further afield.

At markets spices, pepper and other imports may easily be found, while cheese and fruit may be bought cheaply. Throughout northern Christendom pickled herring is widely available, as are spices, nuts and dried fruits from the Mediterranean, but at a price. In the south unusual beans and cheeses are often found, alongside goods from overseas.

The evening meal is rarely a problem for a traveler. All inns routinely supply an evening meal, so long as the traveler arrives an hour before dusk so the innkeeper knows to cater for him. Late arrivals may have to pay extra, go hungry, or subsist on cheese, bread and other meagre rations. Monasteries invite guests to eat with the brethren (unless they have a separate hostelry for travelers, which usually includes a kitchen, hall and rooms all in one block). Supper at a monastery begins about an hour before dusk. Late arrivals may go hungry if they are of lowly rank.

Bishops and secular lords also entertain guests, typically eating slightly later — petty nobles soon after dusk and great magnates rarely before midnight. Large households can easily accommodate a small group without forewarning.

Noble or picky travelers sometimes carry their own food — particularly spices and other luxuries — to supplement meals in inns. Most innkeepers are quite happy to prepare these ingredients for distinguished customers, and may even be bribed to allow a guest's personal cook to work in the kitchen to prepare special dishes.

However, noblemen may be offended if their hospitality is insulted by guests wishing to have special ingredients cooked for them. Any lord gives distinguished guests the best food from his kitchens, and if a traveler doubts the quality of the host's kitchen, the best course is to give the special ingredients as a gift to the lord: No well-born host would dare to serve guests with food inferior to the ingredients just given him.

No traveler should ever drink water. It is unhealthy and demeaning to do so. Wine is commonly available in southern Christendom (although it is costly further north) — red wine in Burgundy, white in Italy and France, and aromatic wines in southern Germany. Beer is standard north of the Alps, including northern France as well as Germany. Ale is available throughout England and Scotland. Cider is a peculiar beverage visited upon Normandy almost as though it were a curse, though it is inexplicably found elsewhere as well.

Travelers should be careful to buy the weaker versions of these drinks, as stronger brews are both very expensive and rather inebriating. Since roughly a gallon of liquid is consumed during an average day of work or travel, it is important not to buy drink which impairs one's faculties.









I have now been on the estate, my lord Abbot, for a little over two days and have toured the villages and spoken with the serfs and tenants. I shall shortly commence taking an inventory of the manor and a detailed survey of the accounts, which are at best incomplete and at worse nonsensical. I send this letter to explain that I am forced to stay here a little longer than you had hoped, and to give an indication of the spiritual state of the people.

The previous lord, as you know, was neither a pious nor thorough man, but was in fact much given to the sin of sloth and was profoundly corrupt in his dealings. It was his right to appoint to the manor's churches any priests whom he chose, and in one village — that of Bubuid — it suited his temperament to appoint one Father Laurence, who was some distant kin to him.

This Laurence was not a pious man either, and openly maintained a widow in the village, whom he took to live with him, and by whom he has fathered a son. He was present in the village when I arrived, which is by all accounts a rare thing as he is often absent, and I found him a coarse man, speaking no Latin and quite ignorant of many basic teachings of the Church. He did not have the letters of his ordination, and could not tell by whom or through whom he was ordained.

This Laurence rarely hears the peasants' confessions, and celebrates Mass but twice a year, both most imperfectly I would hazard. The people are not instructed in the faith; none can list the seven deadly sins, and many are prone to blasphemy; tithes are collected rarely. It seems to me, my lord Abbot, that a brother should be sent to the manor, perhaps permanently, in order to care for the peoples' souls and collect their tithes.

The ignorance of the people in Bubuid is quite shocking. One man with whom I spoke said his soul was a great bone in his body, which, if he had been good, would be planted in a pleasant field when he died. Another told me that God was a kindly old man; Jesus, he said, was a wayward youth; and of the Holy Spirit he could say nothing.

When I took confession, few of the peasants came, though many had much to repent of. And when I gave set penances for their sins, few understood me properly: Not one person with whom I spoke could remember the words to the invocation "*Hail Mary...*"; few were familiar with the concept of fasting.



In many ways, the people fail to keep the laws of the Church. At least one couple is married incestuously; they eat red and white meat on Fridays as well as fish; and at harvest times work on Sunday.

Many strange customs are observed, many of which smack of paganism and none of which are prevented or discouraged by Laurence.

When they plough the land in the spring, the people do not cut straight furrows, but have curves and chinks in their lines, supposedly so that faeries cannot aim their arrows along the furrows to shoot plough-horses. In practice this means many small patches of field are unploughed, and each field yields less grain than it might. In other words, our abbey will receive a smaller yield from the demesne acreage, unless the people are cured of their superstitious habit.

Moreover, when they cut the first furrow each year, the peasants take a loaf of bread baked with milk and holy water, and bury it beneath the freshly turned earth. Nor is this their only pagan custom, for at midsummer they light a great fire in the fields, keeping it burning until dawn, believing that if it is not maintained the crops will fail. When the harvest is done, the peasants always leave a little patch uncut, so the faeries may live there. Each household also takes a bunch of stems, which they hang in their houses, until the following harvest.

I pray that this informs my lord of the spiritual state of the manor which our Abbey has acquired, and though I have described the village worst afflicted, the peasants in all four villages are in need of pious counsel. My concern now, however, is to complete the inventory and reconstruct the accounts. I hope that with God's grace I shall return within three days.

From Brother Edmund to the Lord Abbot of Rievaulx.



These are the words of His Grace the Archbishop of Mainz, to all ecclesiastics within his jurisdiction who might have charge of any church or chapel or otherwise have cause to conduct baptism and marriage.

So that no cleric might misuse these two Sacraments, it seems necessary to reiterate the conditions under which they should be used.

Baptism should be carried out the day that the child is born, so that a frail or ill-blessed child, snatched up by God the day of its birth, should still undergo this rite. The new-born should be carried to the church by a female relative, and there, with the parents and godparents, it should be undressed, anointed with the sign of the cross, have the correct prayers recited over it, and then be submerged in the water of the font.

Priests hurrying to perform baptisms on sickly children must perform this ritual in its entirety, even if it does not take place in a church and the waters are not held in a font. Further, parents should be advised against delaying the rite, for although many wish their wealthy relations to be called in from surrounding lands, their greed for earthly gifts should not outweigh the child's need for the cleansing gift of the Holy Spirit. Parents should also be advised against nominating more than three godparents, and these people should be chosen for the strength and piety of their souls, and not — as so often is the case — for the value of the gifts they are expected to lavish on the child.

Moreover, when the mother has recovered from the pains of childbirth, she should present herself to the priest. He must greet her at the church door, sprinkle her with holy water and recite a psalm, then lead her inside to bless her. (If the mother dies while giving birth the ceremony must still be performed, the midwife or a female relation acting in the deceased's stead.) Until this ceremony is performed, the woman must not cook nor bake, neither attend Mass nor touch holy water, for she is impure.

Any two people, freely consenting, may be married — even though they may be heretics, excommunicants, or slaves or serfs — without the approval of any other person. Heathens and those who are unbaptized, however, may not be married, and none shall marry if they are less than twelve years of age.



All that is required of marriage is that the proper ceremony be performed, with a priest leading the prayers, delivering a short sermon, blessing the ring and ensuring that the couple exchanges the correct vows. A nuptial Mass then follows, before the couple and their guests leave for their merry-makings.

A couple who are Betrothed — that is, who have firmly agreed to be wed — must be married. If the man marries another, joins the Church or takes the Cross to go crusading, he must pay a heavy fine to the woman. Otherwise Betrothal Vows are forever binding. The Betrothal need not take place in church, nor even in front of witnesses, although a ceremonial church Betrothal is preferable, since it is impossible for either partner to deny their oaths. Too often young men swear to marry a girl without witnesses, in order to bed her. Having stolen her maidenhood, they then refuse to accept their responsibilities.

If the couple swears to marry in church, they should exchange rings there and then, as a sign of their intention (unless they are too poor to afford such). The Betrothal should be announced during Mass on three successive Sundays. The marriage may then take place, except that none may marry during Lent or Advent, the twelve days of Christmas, or between Ascension and Pentecost.



# THE FIRST JOURNEY

## CHAPTER TWO

The first of my journeys involved a trek through Germany and Flanders, crossing the North Sea. At length we came to the Abbey of Jarrow in the north of England, from whence — most unexpectedly — I was sent to stay for some weeks in a small village.

The supposed purpose of my journey was to discuss an exchange of books between us, but there may have been some other reason for the journey. The Grand Master of the Benedictine Order was at the time extremely ill, and our lord Abbot may have wished to know who the English abbots favored to replace him should he have died. Furthermore, certain monks in Germany had much angered the Emperor — claiming that he should merely be the servant and mouthpiece of the Pope and not an independent monarch at all — and it may have seemed that a foreign bolt-hole would be necessary to accommodate them.

In any case, it was clear that our delegation hoped to gain some notable prize from the Abbot of Jarrow, for we took with us two marvelous relics as gifts to his Grace. We carried a finger-bone of Saint Audoenus of Rouen, and a rather ragged quill which was said to have been used by Saint John the Evangelist to write the Book of Revelation.

### The Announcement

It was an unremarkable morning in March, on the feast day of Saint Marinus of Caesarea. All the brothers were gathered in the chapter house, as is usual, to be addressed by the abbot and hear a chapter read from the Rule of Saint Benedict.

The reading complete, our lord Abbot cited a number of petty matters. He criticized a certain lax monk for his sloth, reminded us of the saints who should be honored that day, and listed the benefactors whose souls should be prayed for at Mass.

He then explained that a group of monks were to be dispatched to England to negotiate with an abbey there, and asked that any monk who understood Flemish or English, or was familiar with the difficulties of travel to England, make himself known. I felt obliged to mention my knowledge of the languages and my experience of such travel, and the abbot stated I would be one of those who would go.

Five of us traveled to Jarrow, led by Prior Gerald, who had then recently arrived at our Abbey. We left after making our confessions and taking Mass, the prior on horseback whilst we others walked.

### An Ideal Village

The village at which we stopped on the first night was the perfect image of a rural community, and a considerable contrast to the village where I spent so much time later in my journey.

A group of friars lived on a small grant of land at the village's edge, and it was with them that the prior sought lodging for the night. As the afternoon light faded I took a walk around the village and fell to talking with some of the peasants.

The village had perhaps four hundred souls in it, mostly bound to the land but many being freemen, tending around two thousand beasts and planting all manner of grains in the





surrounding fields. Most of the people lived in the village itself, where houses clustered neatly around the village green and the church. Approximately one hundred were cotters, living further out in isolated dwellings.

The village belonged to a manor house which stood about a mile away. It was run by a bailiff named Aelfreith, who also oversaw the affairs of two smaller settlements. He had been appointed by the lord of the manor eight years before, and had performed his duties with such competence that he had held the post ever since.

I found Aelfreith to be a pleasant man, if rather brisk in his manner, and spent some time speaking with him. He was a wealthy freeman himself, employed two poorer peasants to work his lands, and received a fair remuneration from the lord in return for overseeing the village's affairs.

He rose before dawn each morning, and by first light was out on his rounds, surveying the cow-pens, the sheep-folds and pig-sties, the corn and meadows, the orchards and woods, and the wagons and mills. He was responsible for the day-to-day running of the village, and liked to keep an eye on everything.

He also ensured that the fields were marled, folded, manured and improved, and made sure that everyone did the work they were obliged to do on their lord's fields. He knew the village so well that he could tell me exactly what obligations of work or rent each peasant had to the lord, how many days each field should take to plough, and how much seed or manure should be required for each strip. He knew the exact size of each field and herd of beasts, and where

peasants' holdings were not defined by ditches he knew the exact distance between the markers which separated one from another.

Not only was the bailiff a competent and diligent man, but he was served by bright and honest underlings. There were two provosts, one representing the town itself, the other its outlying hamlet. Each acted as advisor and assistant to the bailiff, and ensured that ploughs and wagons were harnessed at the correct times, that the lord's lands were worked thoroughly and sewn as they should be. They each served for one year in this capacity, and although some villages elect provosts themselves, these men were selected by their lord by virtue of their diligence and expert husbandry.

Under the provosts were the haywards. These men were each responsible for a number of lesser serfs or tenants (ten or twenty each), with whom they worked and whose labor they scrutinized. A hayward commands the plowmen and harrowers at the time of each sowing. At haymaking he oversees the mowers, each August he organizes his men as reapers and gatherers, and he watches that nothing is stolen, lost or spoiled.

All settlements should be planned and organized as this was, but many, I am told, are more ramshackle or ill-organized. Less orderly village plans, with houses spread out or built away from their church are not unknown. Criminal or incompetent men may also receive appointments, worsening village life. Haywards supposedly collude



with their subordinates to steal grain or abscond from the work they should do for their lords. Bailiffs and provosts also allegedly make false measure of the harvest to the lord, in order to reduce amounts taken as taxes, or may cover up their friends' and relations' indiscretions.

## Continuing the Journey

Thence we continued through the German lands, those brethren unused to the outdoor life or prolonged journeys complaining bitterly about the weather. It is true that the rain was often heavy and rarely ceased, but that is simply something a serious traveler must become accustomed to. There is no point to cursing nature, and it is ungracious to our Creator to complain that it fits His purpose to send us rain rather than sunshine. Still, I too was pleased when each day's journey was over, when I could wash my feet and eat a hot meal by a fire.

We stayed on the main roads, which were broad and supposedly free of robbers. We spent each night at a monastery or inn, and thus made good progress. Passing through Flanders, hoping to take a boat across the North Sea to England, we found ourselves traveling amidst heavy traffic, along roads churned into mud baths by the horses and carts which ploughed back and forth.

## The Herald

The reason for the traffic soon became clear, for we overheard a herald extolling the wonders of the Bruges Fair to a group of peasants. With the prior's consent I approached the man to find out about the gathering. Noting my interest he immediately launched into a monologue, eulogizing the event. By the grace of the Count of Flanders, a great fair was to be held (as it was every year), lasting five weeks, and all manner of wonders could be viewed or bought from the stalls — et cetera, et cetera.

The speech was clearly fixed by a set formula, and the herald was employed to shout it amongst the rustics of the area. The merchants who flocked there every year did not need to be reminded of it by heralds. And when the herald finished his delivery, I asked how far advanced the fair was and how difficult it was to find lodgings in Bruges.

The herald said that the cloth fair had finished, and that the *avoir de poinds* (fair where goods are "to be had by the pound") was now under way, selling salt, spices, lacquer, dyes, wax and alum, but also general goods, from cattle to copper to camphor. Dismissing my fears about accommodation, he blithely exclaimed that there were "*plenty of places to sleep*" — though from experience I guessed most of these would be on tavern floors.

## A Flemish Fair

At Bruges the bustle of the fair overflowed from the city onto approach roads, where pedlars leaving or approaching the city tried to conclude a few quick deals as they walked. Furthermore, beggars — expelled from the fair as pests — grovelled for bread to fill their empty bellies. Almsgiving is, of course, a Christian duty, but Prior Gerald argued that we needed our coin to support ourselves through the journey, and gave them nothing. As he is my better I will not criticize him.

Inside the city walls the town seemed to be in chaos. A dancing bear lumbered about on a street corner; a dishonest baker was dragged, bruised and rattling, through the streets by a horse-drawn sledge; bands of armed sergeants roamed about to guard against undesirables. Stalls littered the squares, streets and market places, and pedlars shouted amongst the jostling crowds. There were Spaniards, Sicilians, Swiss, Norwegians, Icelanders, Englishmen, Frenchmen, Portuguese and Provençaux, not to mention innumerable Lombards and the local hordes.

Accommodation, of course, was impossible to find, and after an hour of being jostled by the crowds and holding nervously to our purses we left the city. Outside its walls was a Benedictine priory where we were welcome. Although the guest quarters and stables were already filled, Prior Gerald was given a room of his own and we others were given pallets in the monks' dormitory.

## Roaming the Fair

The following day, Prior Gerald decided that we should peruse the stalls in the fair, in case we came across anything which might benefit our abbey. So, sending two brothers down to the waterfront to find us a ship bound for England, the prior began a tour of the market, taking me with him as a translator.

We glanced briefly at perhaps two hundred stalls, ranging from the narrow tables of impoverished local craftsmen to the grand spreads of the wealthy Italian merchant families. Around us sales were made or agreed for single ounces of pepper or whole barge-loads of wine.

Down by the river a goldsmith sold gemstones, gold leaf and small quantities of precious metals. Here Prior Gerald stopped to make a number of purchases — strips of mother of pearl (to ornament the cover of a book), and a small beryl stone (as a gift for the infirmarer, to aid in the treatment of eye disorders).

As we turned to leave the stall, we were approached by a weasel-faced Burgundian, who addressed us in a broken pidgin of Flemish and Latin. He greeted us humbly, and immediately drew a heavy ring from his pouch which he presented to us with a flourish. It was a holy ring, he claimed, and could be ours for eight shillings. I inspected



the object, which was made of silver, engraved with strange symbols and invocations to the Holy Trinity, and set with a thin topaz. What did it do? Where did he get it?

The ring was made by a monk, he said, who had been expelled from his monastery for being "too wise." (I pursued this, and was assured that he had been discovered as one "far too wise in pleasing women.") Topaz stones drive off insanity, he said, and silver is the metal of the moon, so that the ring, having been "properly prepared," was a potent charm against insanity.

Prior Gerald gleaned enough from the Latin parts of the man's speech to understand that the ring had been somehow ensorcelled, and lashing out with his hand struck the ring from the man's fingers, so that it flew into the river.

The Burgundian immediately started to shout in French and in his absurd pidgin, demanding that we be arrested for stealing his property. Incensed, I shouted at the scoundrel that he should take his charms and sorceries elsewhere, and that if he did not stop pestering us we would have him arrested and burned for blasphemy. He understood enough Flemish to turn pale and flee when thus threatened, and I pray that God will forgive my anger and exaggerated threats.

## The Ship

Our other brethren, meanwhile, located a ship which would leave for England the next day and might carry us with it. It was a Scottish vessel, heavy, ugly and sturdy, which would cut across the North Sea to England by the shortest possible rout and then follow the coast northward to its home port.

Its captain was a middle-aged nobleman, cousin to a Scottish earl, who had sold his meagre holding and bought a ship. For twenty years he had ploughed across that unfriendly sea, taking wool and grain from England and Scotland, or timber from Norway, and returning from Flanders with finished cloth, wine and eastern luxuries.

The ship had one low cabin fitted with two broad beds, which the captain slept in when there were no passengers, but he often carried notable folk — noble families, pilgrims, scholars — from his homeland in Scotland and slept in the hold with the sailors.

Each bed could accommodate two or three of us comfortably, but Prior Gerald was unimpressed by the thought of sharing a bed with any of his underlings. Other ships leaving Bruges were laden with goods and had no room for passengers, and few traveled toward the northern parts of England. We were lucky to find this amiable captain.

## The Sea Crossing

In the North Sea, as I have heard and observed, the waves often rise higher than mountains; whales and other huge creatures sometimes threaten seafarers, and the ghosts of dead sailors howl in the wind. But this was a leisurely

crossing, the boat pitching comparatively little. Still, there was not one brother amongst us who did not empty his stomach from the swell of the sea.

Accompanying us was only one other passenger, a Scottish scholar who claimed to have studied for one year at Paris and subsequently gathered a wide range of experience and unorthodox knowledge. He amazed and amused us throughout the voyage, with tales of faerie forests and demons' temptations. He also demonstrated a number of remarkable tricks. They were put down to manual dexterity but they quite baffled us all. What he did for a living I cannot say, but I would imagine he could earn a crust staging displays of his "magic tricks"; he may have acted as an advisor to some illiterate Scots nobleman.

Within two days we came to a small port near the English city of Durham. Here we disembarked, paid and thanked the captain, bade *adieu* to the sailors and the scholar, and thanked God for setting us safely on dry land.

Following a welcome hearty meal, we set off toward the abbey we sought, and after recruiting a string of local guides were at Jarrow Abbey within three days.

## Jarrow Abbey

The abbey was dominated by its large stone church, and was arranged in the usual pattern, with all important rooms radiating from a central cloister. These buildings, with gardens, stables, sheds and other wooden structures, were enclosed within a stone wall twelve feet in height.

The doors were closed, as the monks were at prayer, so we pulled on the bell-rope by the gate and waited for a lay-brother to come for us. Eventually invited in, we were led across to the abbey's guest house and found rooms.

When the monks had finished their devotions, Prior Gerald was invited to present himself to Jarrow's Abbot, and he took with him the holy gifts we carried. Meanwhile, several lesser monks came to see that we were content with our rooms, and to tell us such useful details as where the refectory was.

The abbey was of a notable size. It had achieved prominence amongst the many monasteries of England's north by undertaking the education of nobles' sons. The fees and grateful gifts from the pupils' parents helped make the place wealthy, and although many other monasteries now educate outsiders' children in the same manner, Jarrow has established a reputation unparalleled in England. A large building set apart from the others housed the young scholars, and contained the rooms in which they were taught Latin, reading and writing, and the basics of logical thought.

As we arrived there was no sign of these children, but at meal times their horseplay sometimes disrupted our silence, and between church services the echoes of their rote-learning echoed into the cloister, broken occasionally by a cry as one was struck for disobedience or stupidity. In time, however, the little imps would grow to be officials in



the courts of great nobles, able administrators of their own estates, or valued members of the Church. Now that some years have passed, one or two of the brightest might be in Paris studying at the university and destined to be great men of the Church, or else in London, studying English law in the hopes of becoming wealthy lawyers or royally appointed judges.

## A Simple Favor

The following morning Prior Gerald came to me, explaining that the Abbot of Jarrow had a simple favor which I might be able to fulfill. He hoped I would be able to help the abbot. Like many men of noble breeding, our prior has the gift of phrasing orders as if they are merely suggestions.

I went to speak with the abbot in his chamber, but found he was otherwise engaged dictating a letter to a scribe. (It often strikes me as strange that men of high birth — though quite able to write themselves — nonetheless have scribes to take down the drafts of their own letters. Perhaps if I were not a mere merchant's son I would find this more explicable.) The lay-brother who served the abbot waited with me outside the chamber, and when the scribe emerged I was allowed to enter.

Dropping to one knee, I kissed the abbot's ring as he held out his hand, and receiving his blessing I rose and introduced myself — though he doubtless knew who I was. Speaking always in eloquent Latin, he greeted me briefly,

saying that Prior Gerald had praised my command of many languages, including English. I answered with due modesty, and confirmed that I understood many English dialects.

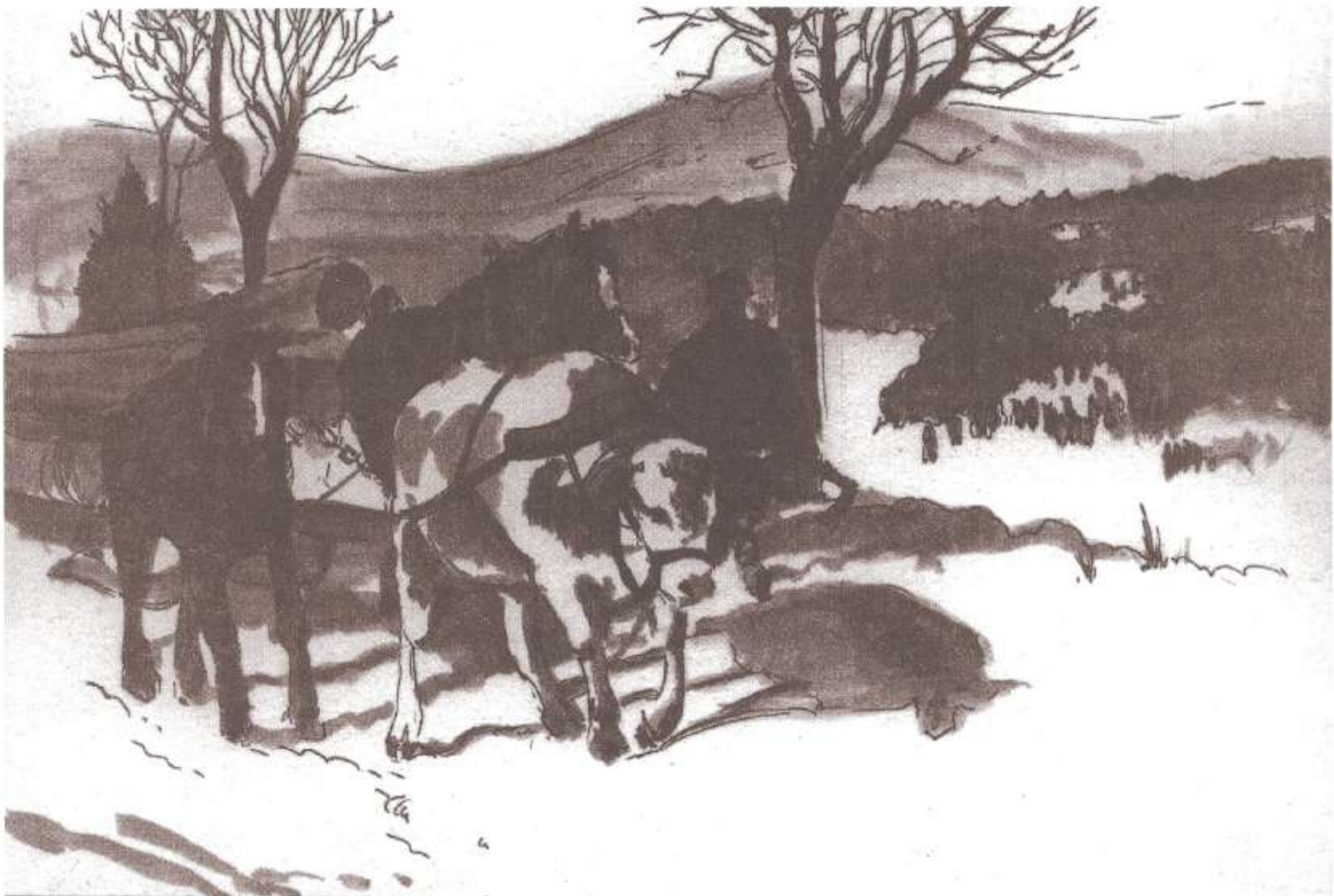
The abbot nodded with approval and began to explain that he needed an experienced man to minister to a village for a few weeks. He continued, saying that the prior had said I might be willing to do his abbey that small service.

Again, the order was thinly disguised as a request, and I only noted that I had very little experience preaching or ministering to layfolk. The abbot was not to be dissuaded.

## The Acquisition of Hindelham

The abbot explained that some months previously, a certain local knight had died, leaving behind four villages and a sturdy manor house. The knight had not had a son, only a sickly daughter and a brother whom he despised. Not wishing them to inherit — and doubtless worried for his own sinful soul — he left a will stating that the lands should come to Jarrow Abbey, and that the abbot should become the guardian of his daughter.

The daughter had already been sent to become a nun at a nearby convent, and steps were being taken to take the running of the estate in hand. However, there were concerns about the souls of the people in the villages, who had



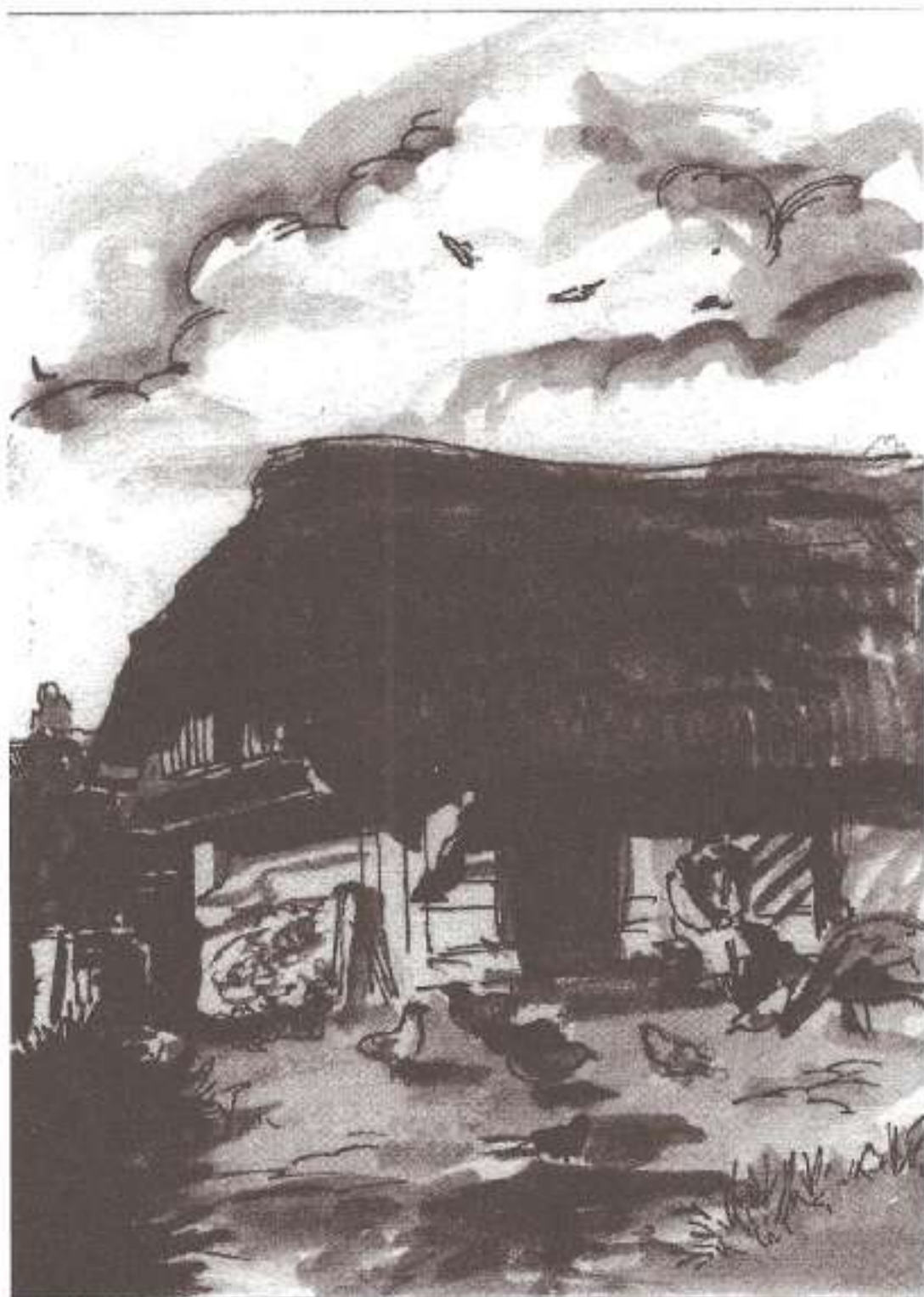


## Setting Out

The abbot ordered that I be given a lay-brother as a guide to take me to Bubuid, and also a mule or anything else I might need. I gratefully declined the offer of a mule, but gladly accepted the offer of a guide.

The following morning I gathered a walking stave, pouch, bowl, blanket and a little food, and said my farewells to my fellows — who were themselves preparing to leave on some diplomatic excursion. I was led through the maze of cart tracks and footpaths which infested the woods and dales around Jarrow. After an hour or so my guide commented that the last of the way was much simpler. I thanked him for his trouble and bade him return to the abbey so he did not miss the noon meal. He protested that he did not mean to suggest that I might go on alone. Still, I insisted that he return.

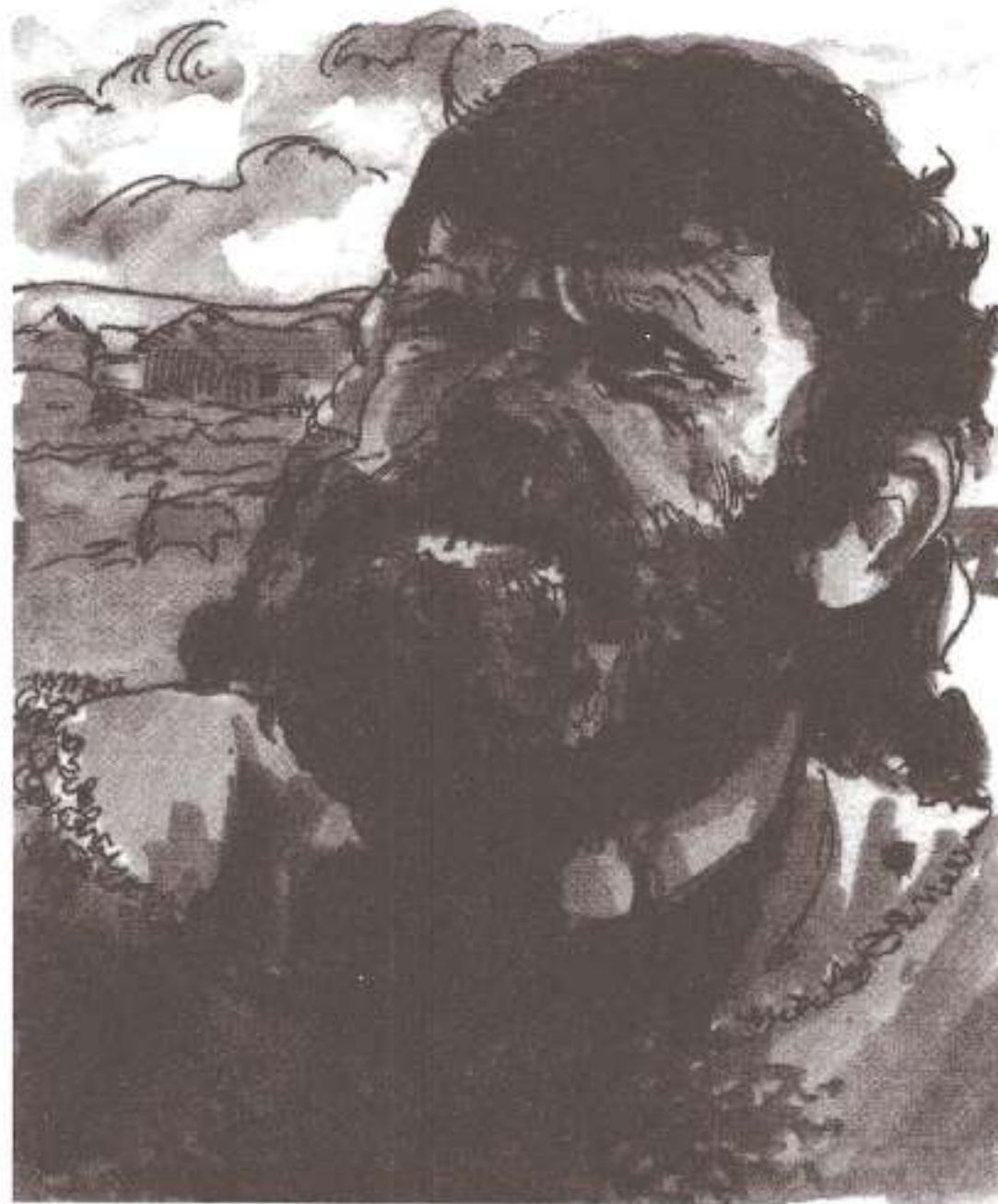
So, faithfully following my guide's simple instructions, I arrived within half an hour at the village of Bubuid.



suffered corrupt, lax and ignorant priests appointed by the previous knight. One village in particular, a place called Bubuid, had been cursed with a woefully inadequate priest, and the abbot wished me to go there and take over the running of the parish.

I had further questions, of course, and the abbot answered every one with eloquent verbosity. He also had a copy of a letter fetched, which described some of the village's sins. I found this letter's contents much exaggerated, but have included it here in case it should interest the reader.

The abbot eventually told me all I needed to know, but his language was so flowery and his tangential musings so frequent that my audience with him lasted over an hour. At last his scribe returned with his earlier letter, copied in a beautiful hand and ready for his approval and seal. Thus reminded of time's passage, he dismissed me.





Ugo, although fifteen years old, had never been to the market before. His father had let him come less because of his constant pleading, and more because his mother refused to have the lad at home when his father was absent. He had made a great effort, the year before, to sulk, disobey his mother and generally misbehave. Although his father thrashed him soundly on his return, it had been worth the gamble.

The goats — particularly the males — were awkward and belligerent, often straying from the path or stopping to rip the wiry grass. Despite his familiarity with the creatures and a sturdy stick to beat them with, Ugo suffered a number of grazes and bruises and nearly permitted one animal to escape. Now he understood why it was usually the oldest and most experienced goatherds who took the beasts to the distant market.

The journey had taken the best part of the day, eight men herding forty beasts along the rocky paths. They had passed through the small town's gates, where the fair was to be held, shortly before dusk. A resident merchant, named Filippo, had set aside his barn for them and for the men of two other villages. For a small fee men and beasts shared the damp straw and darkness.

The market was to be held on the following day, and everyone agreed to stay with the animals that evening so no harm would come to them. Two tallow candles were fetched to offer dim light within the barn. Packed provisions were supplemented by bowls of stew and jugs of watered wine fetched from an inn.

Still Ugo was fidgety. He had not come all this way just to sit in a musty barn, and he noted that three of his companions had slipped quietly away — no doubt to explore the town or settle in a tavern. He wished that he too could sneak out, and listened wistfully to the distant sounds of pedlars' calls, the notes of a bagpipe, the shouts of dancers, and to the coarse cries of a fight. But his father would beat him if he left, and there would be the following morning to wander.

Ugo was woken by his father's hand on his arm, shaking him gently. Several of the others were already up, a soft dawn light crept in through the cracks of the barn door, and the acrid smell of goat dung and urine hung heavy in the air.

Everyone pulled on their shoes and picked the straw from their hair and clothes. Someone opened the door a crack, to let in more light, and the men began to get themselves organized.



One was left with the goats to guard against their theft or escape, two went to attend the morning Mass at the town's main church, and the remainder — including Ugo and his father — went into the market place to set up a pen for their animals.

They set out with six pointed staves and several coils of rope, and walked through a light rain toward the center of the town. There, in front of the church, the long market place stretched before them. Finding a place in the common end of the market, they drove the posts into the ground and lashed the ropes between them to form a pen.

Around them other farmers also set up stalls, some making pens or driving in stakes to tether animals to, or parked their carts full of hay or grain. At the far end of the market the guildsmen — the merchants and craftsmen native to the town — erected their more solid stalls on permanent pitches.

As Ugo's companions finished the pen, a local man approached, representing the town's guild. He looked askance at the pen and told them to make it smaller. The goatherds complained that they had forty goats to fit into the small space, but the guildsman shrugged and said that if they did not make it smaller he would charge them for two plots. As the slaughter day of Martinmas approached, he said, many farmers had brought beasts to sell, with more expected before noon, and they would all have to be packed in.

The goatherds agreed to move two of the posts closer in, and the guildsman took six dull pennies from them in payment for the space. Before moving on he reminded them of the market's rules — that only good Roman pennies were acceptable and that the licensed changer alone could change debased or foreign coins, that goods sold by weight must be weighed at the guild's scales at the charge of half a penny, that no one could buy goods simply in order to resell them at the same market, that no usury would be tolerated, and that only the town's guildsmen were permitted to buy during the first hour of trading.

Returning to the barn the farmers found the merchant Filippo looking over their stock. As they entered he began discussing prices with them. They glanced at one and other nervously, knowing that it was illegal to agree on sales before beasts came to market, but tentatively began to bargain with him. At length a price was agreed for six of the goats, and Filippo agreed to come to their pen as soon as the market had opened.



The men then began gathering their village's goats together, separating them from the others in the barn, each goatherd rummaging through the intermingled flocks and checking the marks on the beasts' haunches. Ugo's father's were easy enough to find, each bearing four horizontal stripes of red pigment on the rump, but some of the others had more ambiguous markings and there was some discussion as to which were theirs and which belonged to other villages.

At last the flock was assembled and driven through the streets, into its cramped pen. The Mass finished, the church bell rang out to signal the opening of the market and a few lone figures began to drift around the square. They were local guildsmen who hoped to pick out the best purchases before the general public was allowed to buy.

Filippo came to the peasants and formally concluded their dealings, bringing two lads of Ugo's age to herd the animals away. While his father was distracted by the sale, the young goatherd slipped away to look at the other stalls.

At the common end of the market there were farmers selling livestock, although a fat traveling merchant from the coast had three long trestles covered in goods, and attracted the eager attention of several guildsmen. The local stalls seemed more varied, and it was to them that Ugo headed.

There were potters and tanners selling their wares, weavers, tailors and rope makers, candle makers, coopers, leather workers and hay merchants, a saddle maker and a harness maker, shoemakers, dyers and others. Half-erected stalls, designed to attract visitors and housewives but of little interest to the guilds' merchants, also briefly caught the boy's eye, but these were the most commonplace of stalls, selling bread, cheese or other foods. He was far more interested in the rare works of real craftsmen.

Ugo found beautifully worked belts and an ornate eating dagger, vivid cloths and pure white candles, spices with strange names, and dried fruits which he had never seen before. And as he looked around he realized that other townfolk and visitors were beginning to wander into the market, eager to browse even before they were allowed to buy.

The haggling of the guildsmen and the compliments or murmurs of the other browsers began to catch his ear, and he became interested in what the salesmen claimed and what their customers asserted, the differences in prices and the arguments that people used as they bargained. Ugo tried to understand why one pot might fetch a better



price than another, or why one length of rope might be twice the price of another. Goats he could tell apart and gauge the health and age of, but these strange wares he found difficult to evaluate.

At length the church bell struck again, to mark the formal opening of the market to the public, and now more people began to gather. There were women and servants buying food for their households. There was a juggler tossing balls in the air while walking about on stilts, while a young boy collected coins for him in a hood. There were beggars and merchants, monks, pilgrims and even a nobleman. An enterprising local sold hot, watery pottage from the window of her house. Pedlars sold trinkets, pasties or fish, and numerous part-time craftsmen walked about carrying their wares in baskets.

Ugo noted one weather-worn pedlar in particular, a tall young man with a glint in his eye and a portable rack covered in miniature crucifixes. The pedlar caught the goatherd's eye and immediately strode across to him, the crucifixes rattling on their frame.

"How my good young sir!" he surprised Ugo, who had never been addressed so flatteringly. "An effigy of our Saviour to hang upon your wall? Handcrafted by an aged blind hermit and doused in holy water every one of them."

"I'm not sure, really." Ugo fumbled.

"Then a rosary for your devotions?" The man fingered the sets of beads which hung from his belt. "One bead for each psalm on every string, a great aide for you at Mass — you are a pious man, I take it? Then a rosary you're bound to need! And this one here," he touched a set made of strangely ringed stones "has every bead of pure agate — guaranteed to keep evil spirits away from you."

"I don't know the psalms," Ugo noted eagerly, "so I wouldn't really get value from a rosary."

"Ah!" The pedlar gave him a confiding grin. "I've got one thing that's sure to benefit you." He fumbled inside a deep pouch and withdrew a small dark box, which he slowly opened.

"What is it?" Ugo asked. "Mandrake? A gem?"

"Far more valuable than a gem!" the pedlar exclaimed, holding out the open box with a proud grin, revealing a small shard of wood in a bed of grubby wool. "It is a splinter of Christ's own Cross! One of the greatest relics in all the world! But to you it's only one shilling."



A whole shilling! Ugo had less than a penny. But still, if a minor relic — like a Saint's finger — could cure disease or drive off a demon, then such a great artifact would surely be worth one hundred shillings. It seemed a bargain.

"I'll go and get some money," he hastily agreed. "Don't sell it to anyone else."

Ugo turned and hurried back toward his father and the goats, leaving the pedlar to thank God for rustic fools.

Back with the goats, Ugo found his father in a foul temper.

"And where in hell have you been you bloody fool?" he railed at the boy. "You were needed here to watch that the goats didn't get out — God's breath, if one had got out and upset a stall it might have cost us a fortune. . . Well? Give me one good reason why I shouldn't tan your hide."

"I was looking for sacks for you, father," he ventured desperately.

"Sacks?"

"You said you wanted some good sacks, and I thought I'd look at the wares as soon as possible."

One of the other farmers laughed and slapped his father across the back. "Your lad's a born merchant, Thomaso."

"He's a born goatherd and best not forget it," he retorted, shooting his boy an ugly stare. "But if you've found me some sacks we'd best have a look at them."

The stall sold rope, leather, sacks, pouches and innumerable other oddments. Ugo's father looked one of the sacks over with great care.

"Where did you get these?" he asked the stallholder. "I can't find the maker's mark."

"They aren't marked," the merchant admitted. "It takes time to stitch a mark in, and I get these cheap 'cos the man who makes them works quickly. They're good and strong, though. Pull at the fibres — go on — and look at the stitching. It's good workmanship."

"It looks good. But I don't like buying anything if I can't tell who made it. How much do you want for them?"

"They're a shilling each, but they'll last well."



"He's been selling them for much less, though — I've seen him." Ugo leaped in, and launched eagerly into a prolonged bout of haggling on his father's behalf.

At length the merchant agreed to take three male goats in exchange for 20 large sacks, and sent an assistant to argue about which goats these would be. As he accepted the beasts in lieu of payment, he would doubtless feel justified in selling them again at the same market, or else trade them with a butcher the next morning.

"Father," the boy ventured as they crossed the market with their sacks, "there's a man here with a splinter of Christ's Cross."

"Really?" his father nodded with some admiration.

"He'd be willing to sell it."

"Then it's either too expensive or it isn't real."

"It's only a shilling."

"Ugo!" his father stopped and turned to him. "Can you imagine what your mother would say if I spent a shilling on a piece of wood?"

"But it's a piece of Christ's Cross!"

"It may well be," his father noted with a shadow of skepticism, "but we need food, clothing and tools. We need to be able to eat. Now come on, we'll get some fish for Friday." He turned toward one of the local pedlars, but his son touched him gently on the arm.

"Not that one, father. I heard someone say he reddens old fish with pig's blood."

"You really are a budding merchant." His father smiled with bemused admiration. "Alright then, you pick the fishmonger."

For the rest of the morning Ugo strived to avoid the pedlar from whom he had promised to buy the relic, too embarrassed to face the man and admit he had no money.

After a hot snack at midday the villagers set out for home, hoping that without the stubborn goats to slow them the journey would be over by nightfall. In sacks and pouches they carried cheeses, utensils and preserved fish. Some had small kegs of concentrated wine, others one-ounce packets of cheap spices, all of which would be given over to grateful wives.



Ugo loitered near the back of the group. He reflected that next time he went to market he would have some carved wooden pegs to sell. Or perhaps he might get some arrow heads from the blacksmith, or some cheeses from his mother. In exchange he could bring back small objects to sell to women whose menfolk had been too busy to get to market, and make a tidy profit from the venture. And if he saved that money and used it to buy more arrow heads or cheeses — well, who could tell?



A story is told of a certain widow near Lyon, who traveled with her sister to hear righteous preachers and make pilgrimages to churches where the relics of saints resided. Her wandering was fuelled by her love of God, but also by her love for her husband, who had in his day followed the blasphemous heresy called Waldensianism.

Converted to the true faith by the preaching of a young Augustinian friar, the woman pledged herself to making pilgrimage and prayer, not for her own soul but for that of her misguided spouse. No more loving and dutiful wife could any man wish for.

However, after some years her savings became exhausted, and she went then to the friar who had first helped her turn from heresy.

She told the preacher of her pledge, and lamented that she had no money and could not continue to live in virtue upon the meagre charity of the local folk. She asked only for the holy man's prayers, but he gave her much more.

The preacher told the widow that she should go to the house of a notorious merchant, who was a friend of the Waldensians, and who lusted excessively after profit and often indulged in lending money at interest. She was to present herself to him and ask, in the name of Christ and the holy Church, that he give her silver equal to the weight of a single breath.

Obediently the widow went to the merchant and asked in the name of Christ and the holy Church that he give her enough silver to equal the weight of a single breath. Smiling, the merchant took her to his money table, where he heaped a fist-full of coins onto the scales and bade her blow onto the counterbalance.

Trusting only in Christ and the Church, the widow leant down and blew upon the scale. When she blew the Holy Spirit came from her mouth, so that its inestimable weight pressed upon the counterbalance, and the merchant's silver was thrown into the air and rained down about him.

The merchant put more and more money on the scale, but no amount of his sinfully earned silver could compare with the widow's holy breath. At length the usurer saw that he was defeated and begged the widow to be merciful.



The widow returned to the friar and asked what she should do. He advised her to be merciful, and instructed her to demand only the money that the merchant had made through charging interest on loans.

The widow did as she was told, and with a heavy heart the merchant piled a mountain of coins upon the scale, which balanced of its own accord as if to show that God forgives the sins of even one as wicked as the merchant.







# THE VILLAGE OF BUBUID

## CHAPTER THREE

I arrived at Bubuid around noon, when the peasants broke from their work to take a light lunch. It was drizzling, and I found the people sheltering in groups behind hedges and sheep-folds. I sought out the provost, Hankin, who represented the manor here, and introduced myself to him. He was taken aback by my arrival and was deeply suspicious of my foreign accent, by which he incorrectly identified me as "a northerner." It seemed that the Scots' border was as far away as he could imagine.

Nonetheless, he could hardly turn me away, so he directed me to his own home. There his wife, Aedwine, welcomed me cautiously — without hostility but with a certain nervousness. She gave me some bread and ale, with cheese so hard I had to break it with a hammer. She explained that I should have to sleep in the same room as the rest of the family. Disturbed by my unexpected arrival and foreign accent, she was not inclined to say more and busied herself making cheese and weaving, aided by her young daughter.

The house was a typical peasant dwelling, five paces in width and twelve paces in length, separated into two rooms by a six-foot tall wattle partition (made from interlaced rods and strips of wood), which provided a little privacy and reached up six feet from the floor. The external walls were similarly constructed, but with "daub" applied (clay and dung) to block out the wind and rain. The walls stood on a low stone foundation. The floor was simply packed earth, bowed a little in the middle from years of sweeping. The

furniture — two tables and several stools — were simple and a little uneven. Nailed to one of the rafters, I noticed, was a small bunch corn-stems.

The larger room was the eating and working area, with a small fire, where wood and dried dung burned, and a small oven (which was about the size of a table and thus doubled as a work surface). Accessible from here was a smaller chamber, where two beds were kept. One of these was occupied by Hankin and Aedwine, the other for their three children. At this stage I was uncertain exactly where I was supposed to sleep, and resigning myself to a night on the cold earth, I prayed there were not too many rats around the place.

Concerned that the villagers might gossip if I were to stay with Aedwine without other adult company, I left as soon as I had eaten lunch and sat in the church until dusk approached. I had never expected to take charge of a village church — for however short a period — and I prayed earnestly for guidance.

At dusk I anticipated that the men would be returning from the fields, and left the church. I reached Hankin's house at the same time that he and his sons also returned, and we entered together.





## The First Conversation

That first evening I sat with Hankin, explaining the abbey's concern that the village should have the benefit of a more suitable priest than Father Laurence, and attempting to put his mind at rest. He had perhaps thought I came to extract more work or produce from the peasantry, or to interfere with the village's running. When I assured him that I had neither knowledge of nor interest in cultivation, he became somewhat easier.

He asked me where I had come from, and I tried to explain, but after some minutes I gave up, content that he was at least aware that I came from "across the sea" (rather than "the north") and that my home was "farther away than Jarrow."

I decided not to ask questions about the piety of the people — which may have made Hankin defensive — but instead asked after the health of his family, the suitability of the weather, and so on. Amongst other things, I congratulated him on having produced more sons than daughters, and he replied without emotion that Aedwine had actually brought forth two other daughters who died in infancy. When perhaps one child in four dies in its first years, the peasantry can easily be excused their lack of grief for the deceased.

As Aedwine served up dinner (chicken stewed in a gooseberry sauce, with bread and strong ale), I did ask about the bundle of corn stems nailed to the rafter.

Hankin shuffled nervously at this, and stammered that it was a portion of the last year's harvest. He said it was their custom to raise a mug of ale to the corn sheaf each night before dinner and ask God to bless the coming year's harvest. He had not done so tonight, he said, because he knew the monks of Jarrow frowned on many of their customs. Seeing no harm in petitioning the Lord, and eager to win his confidence, I immediately raised my mug toward the bundle and bade God bless the house and harvest. Smiling with relief, Hankin and his family drank the toast with me, and they became more relaxed.

The meal passed amiably and with light conversation. When we had mopped up the last of the sauce with our bread, I said a brief prayer, in their own language, thanking God for the meal. All said Amen, and we rose.

The bowls and mugs were quickly rinsed, and Hankin asked if I would object to sharing a bed with his eldest son. The younger two, he said, could sleep with their parents, but there were only two beds and neither could accommodate five people. Dismayed that they should be too cramped, I suggested that I could share with two children and they only with the youngest, so that we would all sleep better. Flatteringly, the provost would not accept my offer, and insisted that I should not be uncomfortable while I was a guest in his house.



# Hankin and Aedwine's Day

Hankin and Aedwine were the first to rise each morning, as the first light of dawn broke, and lowered the shutters from one window. By the dim light the woman built and lit the fire. As she began to heat water for porridge, Hankin checked his tools and made any improvements or repairs that seemed necessary, or else settled to some handicraft (such as wood carving).

When the hot porridge was ready the children also arose, and the family sat around the table in the main room to share a solid breakfast, eating not only porridge but also bread and apples, washed down with watery ale.

Day having now broken, Hankin and his elder son left the house to work in the field. At certain times during the year — at ploughing, mowing and harvesting, and at Martinmas (November eleventh) when surplus livestock is slaughtered for the winter — a peasant's life is hard and frantic. But in between these times life is gentler.

And so, during my stay, Hankin and his son engaged in more leisurely work, though they were still occupied throughout most of the days. Their work varied, as they maintained and improved their own lands or helped their neighbors with similar tasks: spreading manure, clearing ditches, mending fences and hurdles and pens, and rethatching the barn or house.

In addition, as provost, Hankin was obliged to see that the other villagers did the work they ought to on the manor's lands (which he did in a rather cursory manner, so that it took him barely half an hour each day). As a tenant himself, Hankin was obliged to work one day each week on the manor's lands, as a form of rent for his own holding. Such work involved the repair of a footbridge, pruning trees in the orchard and manuring the manor's fields.

On some afternoons Hankin returned to the village, where he relaxed with the other men or busied himself with some manly craft — leather working, rope-making, carving bowls or making tools.

Aedwine, meanwhile, busied herself seeing to the poultry, milking the family's ten sheep and one cow, and cleaning the inside of the house. She also spent much time engaged in crafts such as weaving, sewing, mending shoes and clothes, or making tallow candles from fat. She also made cheeses from the sheep and cow's milks, and baked bread. At other times she went into the woods to look for edible herbs (which she hung to dry above the oven), or led the children on expeditions to collect firewood.

The couple's younger offspring were expected to help their parents as often as possible, and were not permitted to go gallivanting off or waste time with idle play. They helped with menial tasks such as milking and cleaning, baking and candle making, and practiced crafts such as weaving. Their other tasks included the collection of firewood, taking the

sheep and cow out to pasture for several hours each day, and spreading the animals' muck to dry in the sun so that it could be burned on the fire.

Lunch was eaten in the village at around noon, when a little bread and hard cheese was consumed, with generous mugs of ale. The children carried lunch to the men working in the woods and fields, everything piled onto trays. Dinner was eaten at dusk or soon afterward, lit by the fire and tallow candles. After this the family sometimes sat and talked for a little, or Hankin went down to the village "tavern" for an hour, or two of the family played a quick game of nine-mens-morris. But most often all immediately retired to bed, and slept until the following dawn.

## Exploring the Village

Over the next two days I walked around the village and its adjoining woods and orchards, speaking with the inhabitants and considering the appearance of the place.

The settlement lay along a small stream, from which they took water and, occasionally, small fish. Two narrow foot bridges and several fords linked the two halves of the village, of which the greater half was on the south side of the water, where many houses clustered around the church and its cramped graveyard.

In general, the houses were arranged along rough roads or tracks, which radiated outward from the church and tithe-barn (where the abbey stores its share of the grain after harvest). This arrangement had arisen more by accident than design. Carts taking produce to the manor house, abbey or market had wended their way between the houses and thus carved out well-trodden roads over the years.

The buildings were well-spaced, and most were surrounded by vegetable gardens and lesser structures. Typical out-buildings included sheep-folds, chicken coops, pig or cattle pens, and perhaps a small private barn. Most peasants, however, did not keep their own barns, but stored their grains in one of the large communal barns. In bountiful years part of the harvest might be stored in the church. In other instances there were no out-buildings at all, either because grains were stored in the rafters of the family dwelling and the beasts occupied a room in the house, or because the peasant was so poor that he had no beasts of his own and worked primarily as hired labor on others' strips.

Each home also had a latrine-pit outside, surrounded by a fence or covered by a rickety building. Every few days the householder would fill the pit in and dig a fresh trench beside it, or more often dig out its noxious contents to be spread on the fields along with the animal manure.

The village "tavern" was also a place of some note. It was not, in fact, an inn or tavern in any usual sense, and offered neither accommodation nor hospitality to a traveler. It was merely a room adjoining the brewer's workshop (and stank mightily of fermenting grains), where benches and stools were arrayed in a circle around a central fire.



The local men sometimes gathered here in the evening, although it was never suggested that I might be welcome there, and they sat talking and passing around a common "cup." This vessel was a deep bowl, holding perhaps two pints, which was passed slowly around the circle of drinkers, each taking a sip and then handing it on. When the ale was all drunk the cup was filled again, each drinker paying in turn to have it refilled.

I also understand that pigsknuckles, dice and nine-mens-morris were played in the brewer's room by the locals. The gathering was sometimes taken as an opportunity to discuss the organization of the harvest or other matters affecting the village. Indeed, when Hankin wished to discuss matters with his haywards, he often convened their meeting there.

Around the settlements were fields, each divided into strips by ditches. Each strip was held by a single villager, and a typical householder might rent between one and four strips — two being enough to make a family self-sufficient. Some comparatively wealthy tenants (like Hankin) held ten or more strips, which they rented out to poorer subtenants.

Of course, none of the peasants actually owned their own land, for the entire area was actually owned by the manor (which now is owned by Jarrow). And ultimately, every inch of the country is the property of its monarch, and even the greatest nobles hold land only from him. However, the tenants (and lords) could not be deprived of their land at whim by their overlords. Just as a noble holds his land by right of birth, so a tenant holds his land by custom, and can buy and sell the land to any other peasant as he wishes.

It may be noted that no tenant may be forced to relinquish his holding unless he can no longer pay his rents (unfair increases in which may be ruled invalid by royal law-courts). Sons or widows may inherit land, often in return for a small payment. The price of inheritance, like anything else, is defined by custom, the local tradition.

Some fields in the village lay "fallow," grazing sheep and cows, while others were planted with grains — wheat, barley, oats — or with peas. Beyond these, the scrubby moors rolled away on all sides, pocked by sheep-folds and shepherds' huts, and criss-crossed by tracks leading to other villages. Two small orchards clung grimly to one slope, and in the boggy ground around the stream's meander, a herd of brutish pigs scavenged, tended by a young boy.

## Gaming

The holy mother Church condemns gaming of all sorts, as it distracts men from their proper business, causes them to be careless with their money, and can ruin their families. I made a note of the villagers' pastimes, although I did not join in with any, and was relieved that they rarely played for money.

Dice and pigsknuckles are perhaps the most common forms of gaming throughout Christendom. In the simplest form each contestant throws two dice (wooden cubes with different numbers of dots inscribed on each side) and whichever gets the highest total number of dots is the winner. Alternatively, two pigsknuckle bones may be thrown instead, and there are three different ways in which each bone can fall. The contestant who gets the knuckles to fall with their narrowest sides down is the winner.

More complicated games of dice and knuckles are also played, which I do not understand, but all are ultimately games of chance, and they are pointless unless bets are placed.

Nine-mens-morris is a more skilfull game, which need not be played for money. Here a square board is used, which must be bored with twenty-four holes, set around the board in three concentric squares.

Each contestant has a set of nine pegs, each set stained a different color. In turn they place their pegs in the holes, one at a time. If one contestant manages to lay three pegs in a line, he may remove one of his opponent's pieces from the board. When they have placed all of their pegs, they begin to move them around the board, one place at a time along certain lines, still attempting to get three in a row. The winner is the person who thereby removes seven of his opponent's pegs, or has the greatest number on the board if the game grinds to a stalemate.

One bloodier and rather more exciting pastime which the villagers indulged in was cock-fighting, where two specially reared fighting-cockerels were put together in a circular enclosure. The pen was about five paces across and stood near to the church, in the center of the settlement. Most Sundays two birds would be pitted against one and other.

Many of the villagers took great pride in their fighting birds (and Pride is, as everyone knows, one of the seven deadly sins). The owner of the winning bird kept the loser's carcass, which usually provided a couple meals for the family. Other villagers, spectating, placed bets amongst themselves, and would not desist no matter how much I warned against the evils of gambling.

Hankin had earned much prestige in the village through his champion cockerel, an aggressive bird named Hereward. Having lost an eye and many feathers in its fights, it lived in forced retirement in a cage by Aedwine's oven, where it amused itself by trying to bite chunks out of Hankin's hand as he fed it. None of the villagers had a bird they dared pit against Hereward.

Bull-baiting — where a group of dogs fight to the death with a bull — was rarer, occurring only to celebrate great feasts like Easter or at the slaughter around Martinmas. Even rarer was bear-baiting which, due to a lack of native English bears, had not been witnessed within living memory.



## The Villagers



Most of the peasants were serfs, who “belong” to the land and thus are now the property of the Abbey. If they wished to marry, work new lands or move away they required permission from their lord (now Jarrow), and would have to pay for any of these privileges. As they belonged to the estate, all that they owned — including tools, animals and children — belonged to the manor (and thus Jarrow), and their overlords guarded their possessions prudently.

A smaller number were free peasants, generally wealthier and obliged to pay fewer dues and perform fewer services. They were free to marry, move away or rent new lands as they pleased.

The peasants seemed decent people, eager to help each other when needed, but they were somewhat nervous of strangers. With hardened palms and weathered brows, they were a world away from the monks and clerics to whose company I was accustomed. I had as little to say to them as they to me.

Yet I had been sent here to care for these people, and a cleric should always try to be of aid to any of Christ’s flock. So I tried as best I could to strike up conversations with these people, approaching them as they rested between labors or when they returned from the fields in the evening.

In talking to them I was mindful of reports I heard that they were ignorant of the faith and in need of spiritual guidance, yet I found their impieties quite innocent. At least, they did not deliberately break the Church’s laws. They merely suffered from having been badly informed and ill-equipped to follow the laws faithfully.

For example, none could list the seven deadly sins with any certainty. Most remembered Pride, Lechery, Envy and Avarice, but fewer immediately recalled Gluttony or Sloth (which none of them could afford to fall into in any case), and no one even understood what Usury was, let alone knew that it was amongst these deadly sins.

Likewise it is true that on Fish Days (Wednesday, Friday and Saturday, when the Church prohibits the eating of fowl or red meats) they ate the same dishes as any other day. But no one had adequately explained to them that they should only eat fish on these days. The parish priest, Father Laurence, never gave them proper instruction in the faith, and other clerics who sometimes visited were more interested in collecting their tithes than educating the people. Moreover, the villagers lived some distance from the coast, had no fish pond in the village, and caught almost nothing from the stream. The only fish available to them, then, was preserved herring sold at nearby markets.

The people were certainly hard working. Indeed, they had to be diligent to eke a living from that poor soil. A few might have tried to evade paying their full tithes or dues, but most of them were honest folk, who accepted that they must pay tithes and rents, fulfill their customary work duties, and



pay the other dues laid down by law. Still, many people grumbled that they would not pay any "new" dues imposed by Jarrow, and I knew that the abbey would inevitably look to reimpose the peasants' forgotten or lapsed duties.

I hoped that I would no longer be in Bubuid when this conflict arose. Inspired by their evident poverty and a conviction that the abbey was acting unjustly, the peasants might refuse to pay the dues. The abbey would then confiscate some of the village's property or arrest the rebellion's ringleaders — and if the peasants resisted, the local bishop or baron would be called upon, and soldiers would arrive. Bloodshed would be almost inevitable, and armed only with staves, pitchforks, shovels and hoes, the peasants would come off worst. The entire village might even be razed, the leaders hung and the others sold as slaves. Worse still, the rebellion might spread to surrounding settlements.

## Old Aunt Ebba

Amongst the villagers there were a few specialist craftsmen — a cooper, a blacksmith, a tanner, a brewer — but the strangest of them was an elderly woman named Ebba, at least fifty years old, who lived with her daughter and son-in-law on the edge of the village.

It was to her that the people went whenever they were in need of healing or their animals ailed, and many wives also went to her for womanly reasons. All the women called her "Aunt," although more out of respect than affection. It was said that she knew how to keep demons from a house. I was also told that she knew which herbs a woman should eat if she wished to give birth to a boy, and which to eat if she wanted twins.

Moreover, I was told that she was often visited by "the little people," and she left a bowl of milk outside her cottage every night for them to drink. Perhaps these faeries came, for the vessel was often nearly empty by morning, but more likely some wild cat or fox made use of her nightly offering. The villagers never watched to find out, saying that the little folk would curse any who observed them, or else cast tiny lethal darts.

Thus, aware that at least one monk had denounced these people for their unchristian practices, I resolved to see the woman and investigate her methods. I must confess to being rather nervous before the visit. Peasants talk of old women who can curse a man to death or insanity with a few words or a cold glance. While I am certain these stories are exaggerated they need not all be lies. Moreover, it is written by many authorities that sorcerers use herbal poisons for their dark work.

The old woman received me with suspicion, and immediately asked what ailed me. She evidently assumed that I came to seek her council. Taken aback, I muttered untruthfully that I had a headache, and she replied that there were three well-tried cures for head pains, but that each cure would cost a farthing. Intrigued, I gave her three farthings.

First, she told me, I could take a scrap of linen from a cloth once used to shroud a corpse and wrap it around my head before I went to bed, not removing it until dawn. If I did this, she assured me, the pain would depart from my head and afflict the corpse which, since the soul had "gone to be with God," would not be any the worse for it. As I was a monk she assumed that I dealt with the dead all the time, and remarked that I would surely have access to such a shroud. (Considering events which transpired the following week, I later wondered if this remark had been prophetic.)

Second, she said she could mix me a potent herbal remedy, which should be drunk at dawn and then again at dusk, until the pain had gone. She would not say what herbs were involved, but claimed that it would be ready within an hour — so presumably she kept these herbs dried in her house or grew them in her garden.

Third, she advised that I take a small pouch, the size of a purse, and fill it with earthworms. This bag should then be worn about my neck as I slept that night, and by morning the ache would have gone and the worms transformed into an oil. (It occurred to me that if I slept on a bag of worms all night the creatures would most certainly be crushed to an oil.)

Finally, she noted without irony that all illness may be cured only if God wished it so, and I should pray earnestly if I sought to be cured by any means.

I took this opportunity to speak with her about Christ, the Saints, and other such things, and she answered with a piety no more ignorant than any other villager's. And so I left, later returning for the sake of appearances to collect a sealed clay bottle which contained a cure for my fictitious headache.

## The First Mass

On the first Sunday, I decided to hold a Mass shortly before noon, and asked Hankin to inform the villagers. I half-feared that no one would attend, but God showed me that I should not have doubted, for thirty folk attended — although perhaps more out of a sense of duty than piety.

Before the service I took two bright young men to act as servers, informing them what they should do, when they should ring handbells, and so forth. I then prepared the bread and wine and other necessary things, bringing out the pewter plate and chalice, but failing to find either incense or handbells. I reasoned that a village church could probably not afford incense, but wondered why there were no bells. Eventually I had a shepherd fetch two sheep-bells, which I quickly blessed for the purpose of the ceremony, and began the Mass somewhat delayed.

Knowing the ceremony by heart, I performed the Mass a little faster than is normal, hoping that I did not do any great wrong, as I did not wish to bore the villagers — who, knowing no Latin, could not distinguish one prayer from





another. The ceremony became rather muddled, as the servers rang the bells too early and the congregation had no idea when they were supposed to stand, sit or kneel, but the Mass was performed, nonetheless, perhaps for the first time in a year.

I delivered a sermon as is usual, trying to keep it to half an hour in length, but as such village churches cannot afford water clocks I had to guess when the time was up. My English is not perfect, and I am unaccustomed to preaching, but still I pray God that the people learned something from me. Judging by their expressions they were quite unfamiliar with the concept of a sermon, and were mystified by my lengthy performance.

I took as my text Christ's anguish at Gethsemane, and used it to warn against rebellion and selfishness — "*Not my will but thine be done.*" And I reminded them that God sets rulers above us all, and that to rebel against our superiors is a sin against God. Then I finished with an example to illustrate my meaning, though I fear it was neither as clear nor as witty as I had intended.

## Sunday

The remainder of Sunday passed at a gentle pace, the men noisily spectating a cock-fight, and then returning to their homes to undertake domestic chores, to play nine-mens-morris, or simply to chat with friends. The women cooked and saw to their homely duties, chatting with their

husbands or friends, or playing with their children. The youngsters played games with wooden or leather balls, or with tops or horseshoes, or they walked on stilts or played blindman's bluff.

A number of the peasants took the opportunity to visit their kin in neighboring villages, some from affection and others to strike bargains over animals or produce. The young men who had not yet married sometimes went to other villages on some pretence in the hope of finding themselves a wife, as many people in any village are related to one another and must often marry out of the community to avoid breaking the Church's laws against cousins marrying.

Some of the peasants, of course, worked on Sunday. Some did so legitimately, either performing favors for others or completing tasks which they had not finished on Saturday. Others simply worked as they would any other day (particularly the poorer peasants), and I fear my words did not dissuade them from this.

## A Confrontation with Laurence

It was three days after that Sunday that the village priest eventually arrived. This was the man named Laurence, of whom the abbot had told me. He had been absent from the





village for two weeks. (He was a leather worker as well as a priest, I was told, and he toured the towns and villages selling pouches, belts and thonging.)

After visiting his mistress he sought me out. He greeted me politely but with clear apprehension. Not wishing to judge my fellow man, I treated him with an equally reserved courtesy. He wished to know if the abbey had appointed me permanently to his parish, and when I said that I would stay only a few weeks he inquired as to whether or not he would then have his post returned to him — and whether, in the meantime, he would still claim his stipend from the manor.

I suggested that he might ask such questions of Jarrow, and advised him that if he wanted to keep his post, he might provide them with proof of his ordination, and demonstrate his ability to conduct the rituals of the Church. He looked at me as if I had slapped him, and beat a hasty retreat.

Three days later he was gone from the village, and in that time he never once came to the Church or asked me to take his confession. Instead he remained sinfully with his mistress, working on belts and purses, and I prayed earnestly that he might be saved from his greed, lechery and impiety.

## Norfrith's Death

One evening I was called to one of the outlying hamlets, where one of the poorer freemen lay dying, a man named Norfrith, who had a wife and three children.

He was a stout man who had lived to be nearly fifty, which is a notable age for a peasant, and his family could not have been surprised that God now took him from them. Indeed, he had been ill for a number of weeks, so they had had some time to reconcile themselves to his passing. Yet, when I arrived at the house there was a great deal of stifled weeping and an atmosphere of despair. It was clear from Norfrith's shallow breathing that he would not last long.

My first duty was to the dying man, of course, and I sat quietly by him and asked if he had any final confession to make. He slowly recited a list of minor sins — pride, greed, anger — and at last, with great difficulty, admitted to a single marital infidelity. I glanced across to his wife, who was some ten years younger than he, and wondered whether it was this or a previous marriage which he had betrayed. But in any case such speculation was futile and I pronounced him absolved of all his sins.

Then I took some of the bread and wine saved from the communion table, and let him eat and drink a little. Then, with suitable prayers, I anointed his brow, and sat with him for a while until he seemed to drift into sleep.



For the duration of the evening I spoke with the family, reminding them of God's love and mercy, and of the resurrection of the dead into the Kingdom of Heaven, and I held vigil with them. Occasionally I would lead a prayer, but more often simply sat with them and hoped that my presence lightened their suffering.

The songs and poems of entertainers tell that death is a glorious thing, or at least painless and swift, and theologians sometimes speak of it as a simple journey or a beautiful transformation. But these are lies — or at least, they are not the whole truth.

Often a death is slow and painful (a wound or injury that festers, shallow breath that rattles or gurgles through the chest, a pale figure shaken by bloody coughing) to say nothing of the family's suffering. This death was one of these. But at last, around midnight, Norfrith simply stopped breathing and the family's pent-up tears broke forth — all the worse as midnight is often held as an unlucky time to die. In time the family would take solace in the certainty of the man's salvation, but for now the only consolation was that the poor man's suffering had ceased.

Having covered the corpse with a blanket, I led the family in further prayers, begging mercy for the man's soul, invoking any saint who seemed appropriate. I included Joseph of Arimathea (who gave his tomb to Christ) and Joseph father of James (who as Mary's husband is the archetypal father), Peter (who holds the keys to heaven), and the Blessed Virgin Mary herself.

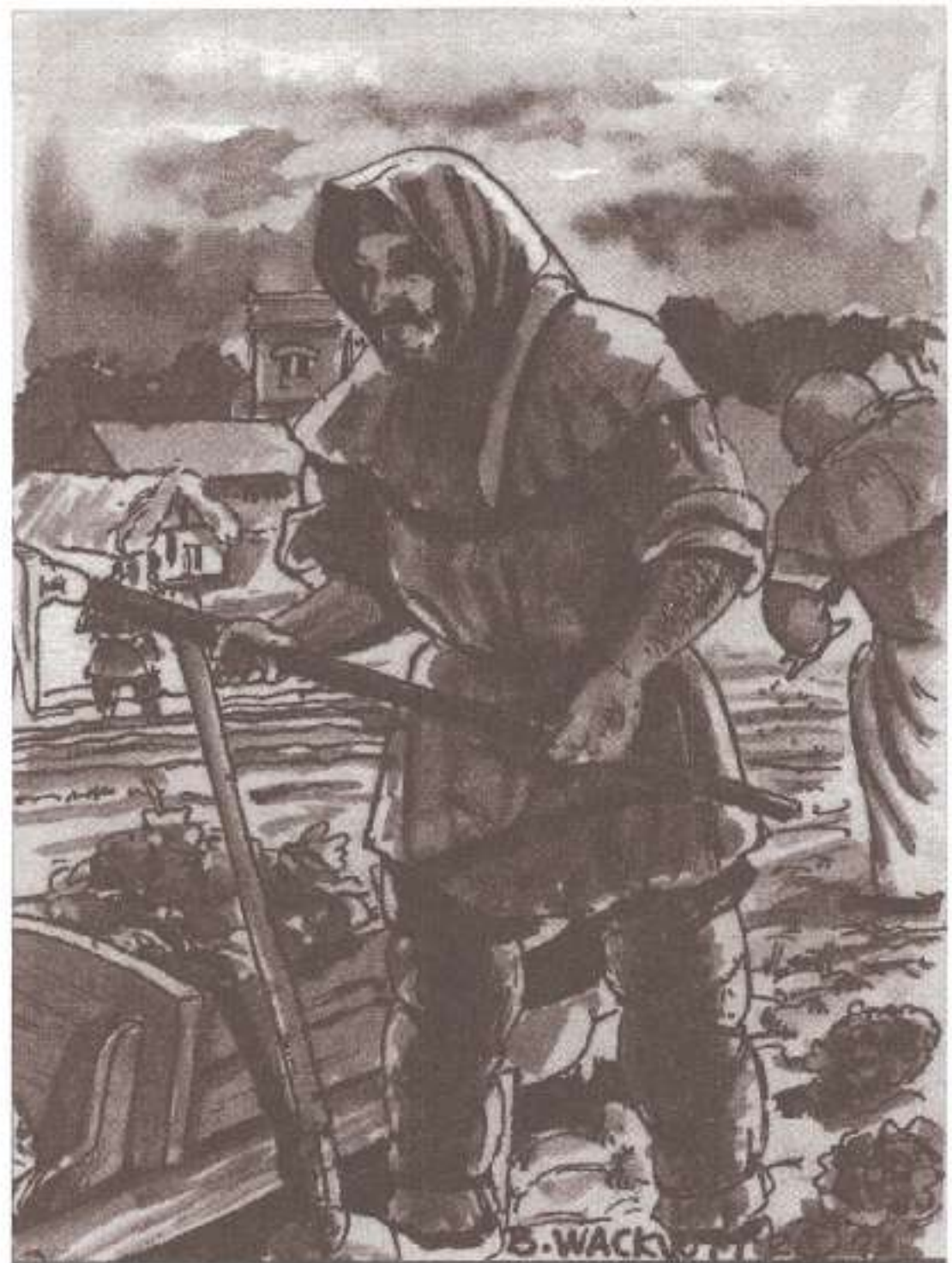
I dozed through the night, sat in the corner of the room, and when dawn came I stirred with the family.

## After the Death

The eldest son was bound to fulfill his fathers' duties to the manor, including one day of work per week — and this being that day he had to look to this obligation, regardless of his father's death. I suggested, however, that he ask to be permitted an hour at noon to attend his father's burial.

Certain neighbors volunteered to carry the body down to the church, while others agreed to dig a grave, and so the body was taken to the church to await the funeral. As we entered the church, I remembered "Aunt" Ebba's comment that I would have no difficulty obtaining a shroud, and I wondered if she had foreseen this death or even poisoned the man herself. The idea seemed unlikely, but I later poured away the potion she had made for me.

The women of the village made gifts of flowers and foodstuffs to Norfrith's family, and the eldest woman baked special cakes which were designed to be kept as tokens rather than eaten. Meanwhile, a young boy was sent out from the village into the nearby wood to look for rooks, as it was the villagers' custom to tell these birds whenever anyone died.



I recited the funeral Mass for the man's soul and cleaned his body as is proper. He was buried quietly that noon, wrapped in a simple blanket, and several of the man's neighbors left their work to attend. As is usual I cast holy water over the grave site, cut the first trench in the shape of the cross, and recited a psalm while the man's neighbors dug the grave properly. Unfortunately, the impoverished village church had neither a Bible nor a Psalter, so I had to recite from my imperfect memory.

An equally small congregation attended the Mass which I said for Norfrith's soul the following morning (I had hoped in vain that more might come if a Mass was held before they had started work), but a feast held in the village barn that night attracted most of the village.

This was a somber meal, but not sad or depressing, and the villagers all together seemed to cheer the widow. I was asked to say a brief prayer before the meal, but otherwise remained quiet, leaving the people to remember their neighbor according to their custom.

Norfrith's eldest son then had to present himself to the manor, and pay the customary fee in order to take over the rent of his father's lands. As he was free and not a serf, he did not have to part with a great deal and could have declined to rent the land. Since his father's widow (his step-mother) had inherited the house and livestock according to custom, he had no property or money of his own with which to start





a new life, so he did accept the land. At least his stepmother was not so young that she might marry again and prevent him from ever inheriting all.

After the funeral, the abbot came to hear the details of Norfrith's death, and a curt letter was sent to me. The gist of the document was that I should not have administered the last rites without charging the family the usual fee, and in so doing I had set a dangerous precedent which might deprive the abbey of future fees.

The abbey was characteristically blind to the plight of the family, who could not have afforded the fee. I wrote back that I was sorry for having omitted to charge the family, but in my heart I found it hard to regret this particular wrongdoing.

## An Invitation to the Manor

After I had been at the village for a fortnight, some of the villagers came to me. They worked part-time at the manor for a few months, as part of their dues, and told me that I was invited to attend a law court there in several days. The abbey had arranged for a royally appointed judge to visit the place, and would send their own representatives as well, in order that any outstanding disputes might be settled as quickly as

possible. Any villager with a grievance was asked to attend, and Hankin was summoned as the tenants' representative. My presence seemed less necessary.

And so, travelling with Hankin and several other peasants, I set out at the appointed dawn, taking only a walking stave and a little bread and cheese for lunch.

## The Manor

Hindelham Manor stood in a shallow valley. The manor was a cluster of grubby wooden buildings, surrounded by a wooden wall and a muddy ditch which might once have been a moat.

Fields stretched out on all sides, and three of the manor's villages were in plain view. Downhill from the manor, a stream meandered through the valley, driving a mill and feeding a large stock-pond. It presumably held fish for consumption during Lent and on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays.

We followed the cart track through a walled pasture and entered the manor's compound over a rickety bridge and through a wooden gatehouse. The enclosure was dominated by a huge barn which spanned the far side of the area. To its left was a small stable and cattle stalls, a dovecote (for pigeons, which supplied meat and eggs) and a vegetable garden. To the right was a large chicken pen and a small cluster of apple and pear trees. In front of the barn was the hall, a separate chapel, plus another building containing a kitchen, brewery, pantry and a servants' bedchamber. Also before the barn was a two-story building containing two bed chambers for the lord's family.

We were greeted by two servants, who led us to the great hall, where perhaps thirty peasants from the manor's other villages already waited.

The bailiff (who presently oversaw the running of the manor and estate for the abbey) greeted me immediately. Seeing that I was a monk he assumed that I knew what Jarrow planned for the estate. Did the abbot plan to send a monk or noble overseer to Hindelham? Or would he remain in charge? Was he to be blamed for the deceased lord's nonsensical accounts? Did he, in fact, have a future at Hindelham at all?

I had to tell him that I was not privy to such information. Somewhat disappointed, he withdrew.

## The Law Court

After about half an hour, four horsemen clattered across the bridge into the courtyard. These men were the judge, his scribe, a representative from the abbey, and a sergeant-at-arms.

As they entered the hall the peasants parted to make way for them, and they took their places behind the table which spanned the far end of the room. The judge sat in the



center, Jarrow's monk and the Benedictine scribe flanking him, and the sergeant stood behind them with his hand resting on his sword hilt.

First the judge called for silence, stating who he was and that he had been invested by the king to uphold royal law. He omitted to say whether he personally had ever seen the king — which he probably had not — but the mere mention of their monarch was sufficient to control the peasantry.

Then he called on those assembled to bring forward any matters which they felt merited his attention, and the peasants dredged up a number of squabbles which had arisen in the year since the judge had last visited the manor. Each claim made was recorded by the scribe, and the judge attempted to unravel truth from slander in each case.

One man said that had performed a service for another without receiving the promised recompense. Another claimed he was owed several shillings in gambling debts by a neighbor. A third complained that his daughter had been betrothed to a man who had since married another, and demanded substantial damages.

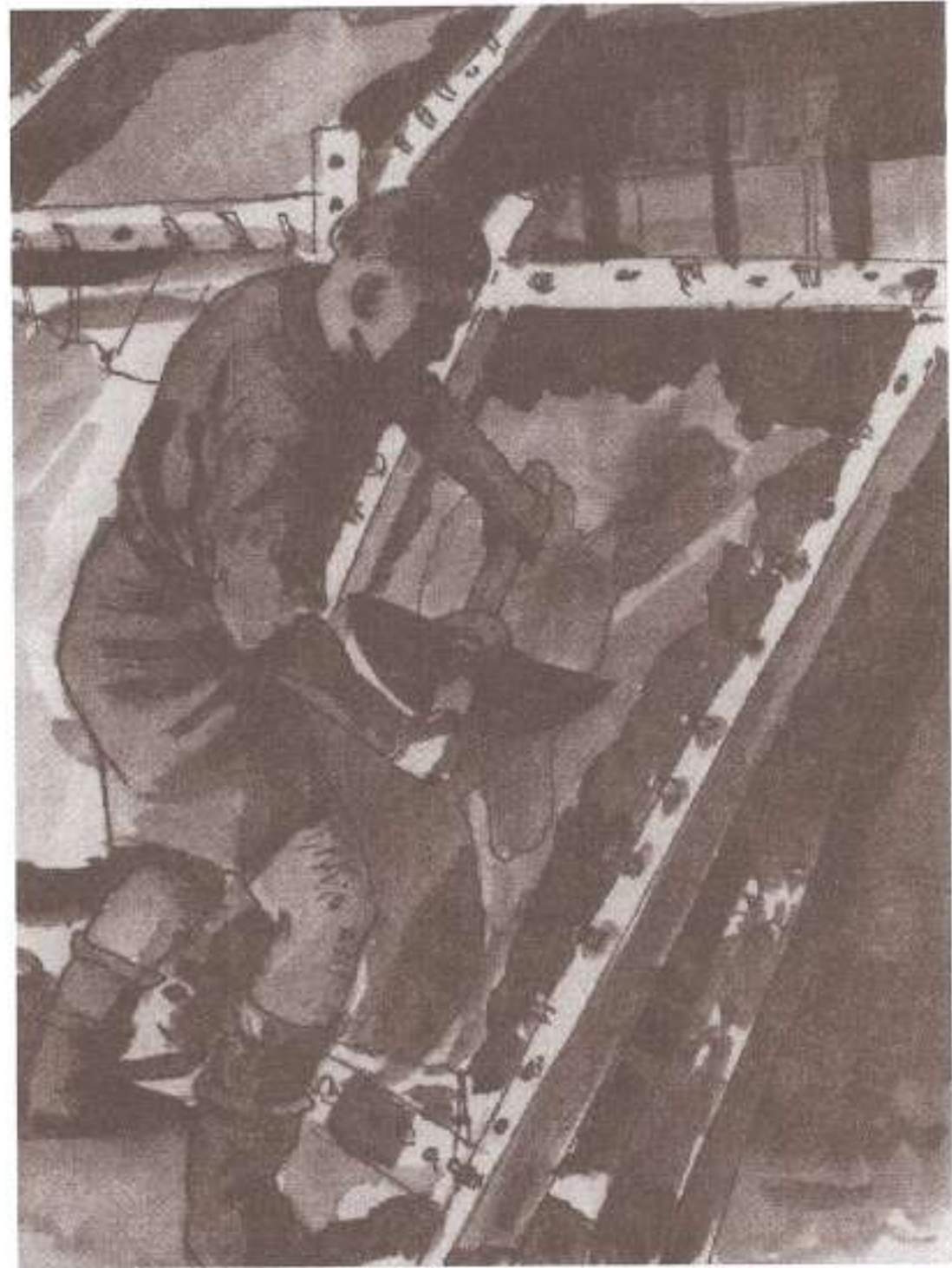
The bailiff, too, brought forward certain matters which had developed since the lord had died, and which he was not empowered to deal with. One of the shepherds had frequently left the manor's sheep unattended while he went drinking; a certain hayward had stolen seed-grain which he refused to return; two families had been gathering firewood from one of the estate's copses without asking or paying for the privilege; and a pedlar had sold him fish which had in fact been poached from his own pond.

All of these matters were resolved after lengthy discussion, and in many instances the argument dissolved into abusive bickering and futile shouting. Fines were levied where appropriate, the negligent shepherd was flogged, and a warrant was issued for the arrest of the pedlar charged with poaching.

Then the abbey's representative brought up the question of the peasants' duties to the manor, and the battle lines were drawn. The serfs claimed that they could not afford to pay more, the freemen said that they would not accept a change in their tenancy agreements, and the provosts argued that no increase was justified.

The monk insisted that he merely wished to return dues to their traditional levels, and produced documents recording that sixty years ago certain dues had been higher, others lower — but the peasants were correct in their suspicion that, over all, a return to old agreements would leave them poorer.

For the remainder of the morning and part of the afternoon the villagers grumbled and argued, and the judge heard evidence and took dispositions in which the peasants contradicted the monk's documents. Whenever anyone from Bubuid spoke I was asked to give my opinion of their character and vouch for their integrity — though I hardly knew them.



The judge eventually ruled that certain changes would be inevitable, but changes in land tenure, yield and use might prove that some of the old provisions were no longer relevant. He said that he would take the matter to the sheriff (who, in England, is a man appointed to oversee justice and royal prerogative in each county), and that a detailed investigation would have to be undertaken.

No other matters being forthcoming, the judge stood and departed with his three companions.

Somewhat placated, but still resentful and apprehensive, the peasants left in clusters. I returned to Bubuid with Hankin and his fellows.

## A Wedding

I remained in the village for some ten days thereafter, at last being called to accompany my brothers back to Germany. I was not sad to leave, and did not consider my stay a great success. Discouraged by my disagreement with Jarrow over Norfrith's death, and having failed to rekindle the village's piety, my entire stay seemed to have been in vain. A more joyous event preceded my departure, however.

A certain couple, named Rognald and Andith, both aged about twenty-five, came to me and explained that they had been living together for two years without being married. They had set up a home together shortly after becoming Betrothed (or "handfasted" as it is often called), and had failed to marry for three reasons.



First, having been Betrothed they assumed, like numerous other peasants, that marriage was an unnecessary formality. Second, both Rognald and Andith's families were too poor to pay for the feasting which usually follows a wedding. And third, Father Laurence had admitted that he was unfamiliar with the marriage ceremony and said they would have to be married in another village.

Now that I had arrived they decided to be married, quietly and without celebration. I advised them that in living together unmarried they had committed a minor Venial sin which they should confess to God, but by being Betrothed they had done no great wrong and had no need to make a formal confession or do any penance. Marriage is, after all, not a particularly religious occasion, and the intervention of the Church and the performance of a ceremony is not of great importance.

I knew that if I performed a nuptial Mass for them, the abbey would expect me to charge for the service — which they could not afford — but I agreed to marry them. And since everyone knew they were living together and Betrothed, there seemed no reason to publicly announce the forthcoming wedding.

So, the following Saturday I met with the couple and their close family at the church door. There, in the porch, the couple repeated their vows and I delivered a brief

sermon on the subject of educating children in the faith of Christ — not the usual half hour discourse, but a swift and brief reminder of parental duties. I then blessed the silver ring, and saying "*in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit,*" Rognald slipped it onto his wife's finger.

It is usual for the couple to distribute alms to the poor after a marriage. Since the small village had neither beggars nor particular paupers (for this couple themselves were perhaps the poorest in the community), Andith simply handed out small cakes to the children who stood by. The two then left, wearing smiles which lifted the heart.

## Departure

I bade farewell to Hankin and the other villagers, holding one last Mass before I left. Many of the people came to the church for at least a part of the service, though I could not tell if they came to honor me or (as I hope) Christ, and from the church porch I set off back to Jarrow.

I rejoined my brothers, we took ship across the North Sea, and with God's grace the crossing was without great discomfort or danger. Through Flanders and Germany we made good time, and returned to our beloved abbey only four months after leaving.



"You men are the provosts and haywards of the villages of Blendleigh and Donne?"

The peasants stood silently before the forest's warden, who looked down on them from his dais and tapped at the arm of his chair, the verderers and other officials of the Forest Court arrayed about him.

"For three months now someone has been trapping hare within the forest boundary. Last month the foresters found evidence that a deer had been shot. It was killed midway between your villages — Well? What have you to say?"

The two provosts glanced at each other, and their underlings stared intently at the floor or shuffled uneasily. No one spoke.

"Damn you! This is not some petty case of firewood being gathered, or of accidental damage. These are the king's beasts your people are killing!"

"My lord," one of the provosts stammered quietly, "perhaps a vagrant or wandering outlaw —"

"For three months?" the warden cut him off. "A wandering outlaw?"

"We know nothing, my lord," the other provost assured him nervously, and the warden stared down at him with contempt. As he looked at the frightened peasants, their faces turned from him and their limbs fidgeted. He was convinced they knew who the poachers were.

"Each household, from both villages, will pay a fine of one shilling," the noble told them, raising his voice above their muttered protests. "The fine will be paid by Michaelmas unless we have already caught the culprits. Now get out."



"The story of your brother? Alright, Line, and then you sleep, yes?"

The girl nestled down into the blankets and looked up at her aging mother. Marion sat back and sighed, unable to understand why the child was so fond of the tale.

"Robert was born eighteen years before you, my petal, the son of my first husband, who you never met. When he was seventeen. . ."

"You missed the bit about Rob's daddy!" the girl objected.

"Rob's father had been nearly thirty when we married and I was only fifteen. He was very strong and handsome — but not nearly as kind as your daddy. When his time was up, God took him away and I was left with the holding. Then I met your daddy, but I did not want to marry again because Rob would not have inherited his father's lands. Alright?"

The child nodded. Her stomach rumbled.

"When Rob was seventeen he met a girl from another village, a girl called Sylvie. But Sylvie was a serf, not free like us, and I did not want them to marry. I wanted Rob to have someone better." She paused, biting gently on her lip. "But they became betrothed in secret, and then Sylvie was going to have a baby." One day, Marion thought, she is going to ask me how women become pregnant. . .

"Now, because Rob loved Sylvie he wanted her child to have a daddy, so he married her in secret. But Sylvie's family found out about it, and they told their lord. That knight was very cross because he was Sylvie's owner, and Rob should have asked his permission before marrying her, and should have paid a special tax as well.

"The knight sent his bailiff to talk to Rob and there was a big argument. The bailiff said he would take some of our family's animals to pay the tax, but Rob knew they were not his to give the bailiff — because they were mine — and he took up a pitchfork to drive the man away. The bailiff drew a sword and your brother jabbed at him with the fork. One of the points went into the Bailiff's tummy, and he started screaming and rolling about on the floor."

"I think Rob was very brave!" the girl smiled.

Marion thought he had been very stupid, but continued: "Rob was scared. He did not know if the bailiff would die from the wound. If he did, Rob would have been hung. He could have lost his hand or been heavily fined just for attacking the bailiff. So he took Sylvie and they fled.



Then Sylvie's lord made me pay a heavy fine because Rob had stolen a serf and hurt his bailiff. He demanded a lot of money. That's why we don't always have as much to eat as we might like. And then Rob and Sylvie were both declared outlaws."

"I think Rob became a soldier," Line asserted with unshakable conviction. "I think he became very rich, and now he has a big hall and lots of animals and serfs of his own. And I think him and Sylvie are very happy. They have lots of children and they always have lots to eat and they wear pretty clothes."

Marion smiled gently and stroked the girl's head. "No one knows what happened to them. But as I've told you, the year that you were born a pedlar came to the village. He said he had been asked to tell me that I had a granddaughter, and that she was called Marion."







# THE YEAR'S CYCLE

## CHAPTER FOUR

Not only the temperature and weather change through the course of a year. The people of town and country mark the different seasons with rituals and festivals which may seem strange to those of us who live apart from society.

At certain times marriages may not be held, at others tenants renew their agreements, and at other times wild feasting inspires many to lawlessness and immorality. Those traveling abroad should be aware of these peculiarities and customs.

### *Carnevale*

In France, Germany and southern Christendom the common folk place great emphasis on the celebration of *Carnevale* ("putting away the flesh").

Troupes of performers tour rural areas performing plays which preach Christian virtues or tell of popular heroes, often with parodies of prayer and preaching, mockeries of the Church, and other profanities which have often been called blasphemous.

Straw figures are burned on huge fires at nighttime revels, cock-fights and other games are staged, and mock battles are fought. Men whose wives have been unfaithful are often humiliated by their neighbors. The most fortunate are merely presented with a set of horns or antlers. The unlucky are crowned with horns and carried around the village on a bed, to the cheers of their neighbors. In some

places peasants are in the habit of occupying their church and refusing entry to their priest for one day, often dancing and feasting in the church or performing other questionable acts.

There are also parades, in which people dress in costumes which symbolize the seasons or months, saints and powers of nature. Those marching are often shameless in the skin they uncover, and obscene mimicry and shouting are common. Animals are slaughtered for a feast, and a great deal of strong wine or beer is drunk.

### *Lent*

After the excesses of *Carnevale* comes the period of Lent, when the fleshly things have been "put away." This is the forty days preceding Easter, beginning on Ash Wednesday, when men should turn their thoughts to God and to their sin and hope of salvation. No one should eat meat (except fish) during this time, nor milk, cheese or eggs, meals are not eaten before noon, and marriages may not be performed.

The beginning of Lent is often marked by a common celebration, such as the lighting of a Paschal Candle. This is a tall, fat candle, designed to burn throughout the forty days. It is lit from a bonfire outside the church and carried inside, where congregation members light their own candles before





the great candle is placed by the altar and Mass is performed. The candle burns as a symbol of hope through the forty days. It is often considered an ill omen should it go out.

Lent is a popular time for pilgrimages, and many make confession at the beginning of the season and perform their penances before Easter. The more pious smear their heads with ash on Ash Wednesday, put away their fine clothes and wear only rough fabrics, abstain from intercourse with their wives, or eat only bread and water. Some folk, perhaps overzealously, whip themselves in memory of Christ's scourging.

## Holy Week

After Lent comes the greatest festival of the Church: the celebration of Easter, when Christ was crucified and rose from the dead to bring us eternal life.

Obviously celebrations center on the attendance of Mass, and after forty days of abstinence most also celebrate by feasting. As God through his love saved us, so we should find the charity to give alms at Easter, giving money to beggars or gifts to subordinates. However, there are other rites held at this time, which are less obvious celebrations of Easter.

With the resurrection of Christ, the renewal of spring is often celebrated. In the minds of the peasantry the return of life to trees and fields is the most tangible symbol of resurrection, and I would not be as swift as some to brand these rites pagan.

Many wives sweep out the ash from the winter hearths at Easter, and decorate their fireplaces with wreaths of fresh green growth and garlands of flowers. As another example, the Maypole may be carried in to the village at this time.

The theme of catching and releasing is clear at Easter. Christ was bound by but escaped from death; we are freed from the bonds of our sin; and the plants and beasts break forth after winter. Thus, there are "games" and traditions whereby groups of women may "capture" men, and then set them free again after some token service has been fulfilled (the man must kiss each of them, for example, or his friends must deliver a ransom of one egg). Likewise, men may sometimes "capture" women. Many have criticized such sports as immoral, but in truth grave improprieties are rare.

The theme of sacrifice is also noted, particularly in southern Christendom. For although the Church condemns sacrifices, it is not unknown for animals to be beaten, shot or burned to death, not as sacrifices but in memory of Christ's suffering.



## May Day

On the Feast of Saint Philip and Saint James (May first), and on the evening before, countryfolk often celebrate the evident arrival of spring. This custom is particularly strong in northern Christendom — England, France and Germany. The customs with which they mark the event are often denounced as excuses for lechery, but I would not presume to pass judgment.

Men and women roam the roads and villages in bizarre masks and costumes, dressed as devils, animals and the like, demanding that they be bought drink and be given food. They mock and parody their hosts and those they meet. Although it is considered unlucky to refuse hospitality or to be discourteous to these tricksters, more than one batch has been ejected by householders indignant at their lewd remarks, or, for that matter, beaten by noblemen enraged by their lack of respect.

At this time of year, women may assemble in their finest clothes, with flowers in their hair. The most beautiful amongst them is chosen as queen of the May, crowned with a wreath of greenery and blossom. The queen chooses a partner or "lover," and a dance begins. The queen and her partner lead and preside over these dubious frolics, which often involve a dance around a maypole (a wooden column usually erected in the village center). One common motif of the celebration is a mock struggle, wherein the queen's real husband or father tries to break through the ring of dancers to reclaim his wife or daughter from her chosen "lover." When all are exhausted they return to their homes or dine in the open air.

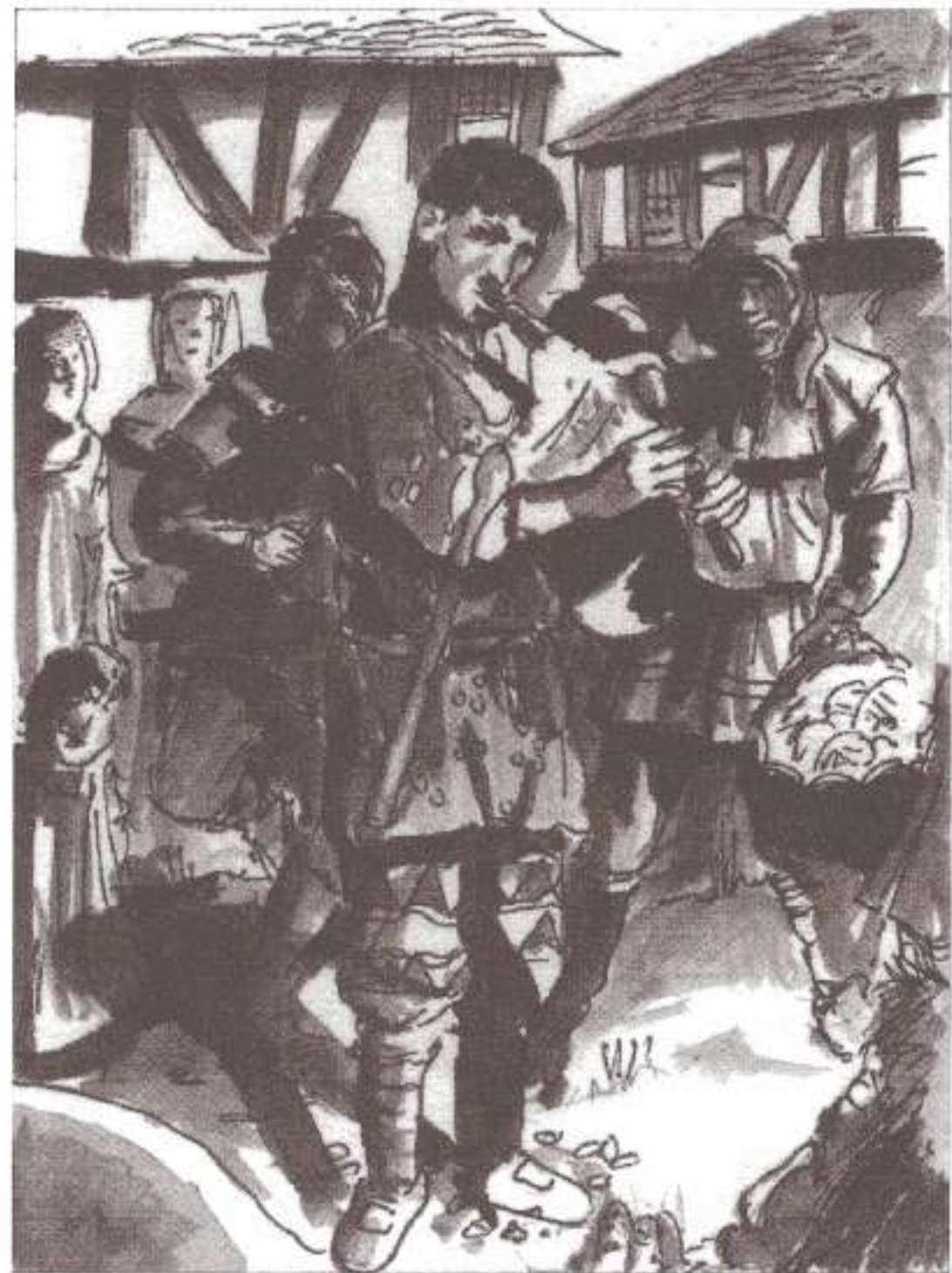
Such celebrations may indeed place the participants in danger. I have heard from many of May-dancers who frolicked in church yards and were snatched away by the Devil or by Death.

## Rogation Tide

Forty days after Easter, the Church celebrates the Ascension of Christ into Heaven. On the days preceding Ascension, and on the Feast of Saint John the Baptist (midsummer's eve, June twenty-fourth), the peasantry hold many other rites and celebrations.

Rogation Week, preceding Ascension, is a time when many villagers parade around the boundaries or fields of their village or parish, often led by their priest. They ring bells, carry boughs of trees and bunches of herbs, and sometimes sprinkle holy water.

The purpose of the processions is to drive evil spirits from the land. In order to frighten these spirits away, some villagers carry great effigies of dragons or wear masks of wild beasts. The midsummer practice of marking boundaries with fires or forming torch-bearing processions has a similar function.



Fires are often part of midsummer and Rogation ceremonies. Flaming wheels are sometimes rolled, or bonfires lit over which young men dare each other to jump. "Saint John's Fires" are lit, burning animals' bones along with timber to drive evil spirits away with their stench. The favored spot for these is the churchyard, on the north side of the church (the "devil's side"), where demons are said to congregate.

Much discouraged by the Church, plays of legends and miracles are also commonly performed, often in woodland groves or by springs. Participants usually wear grotesque masks and dress up as animals, devils or dragons. Indeed, processions around field boundaries often follow these performances, with actors leading the way. Wrestling-matches, stone-throwing competitions and other sports are common. As Saint John's Day is a holiday, the people have plenty of time to indulge themselves.

It is widely believed that the time around Rogation is a period of great spiritual danger. Devils are said to gather to damage newly-sown crops. Faeries are supposed to dance in isolated woods. And dragons are said to couple high in the night skies.

## Autumn

After midsummer's, most peasants are kept busy by hay-making and the harvests, bringing in their crops and selling surpluses at markets. By Michaelmas (September





twenty-ninth), tenancy and other agreements are made or reconfirmed.

The end of the main harvest is usually celebrated by a communal village feast, and a number of Saints Days are proclaimed holidays (such as the Feast of the Assumption, August fifteenth). All holidays, of which there are nearly fifty during the year, are marked by gaming and dancing.

## Winter

The holidays of All Hallows and All Souls (November first and second) are popular with the common people. In addition to the Masses and prayers for the souls of the dead, people observe many customs by which they honor their ancestors. Food for the dead is left outside doors or in churchyards, vigils and prayers are held in graveyards, watches are set over graves to ensure that no devils come to disturb bodies within, bonfires are lit and straw effigies burned, and masked and torch-lit processions around burial sites are intended to frighten off evil spirits.

At Martinmas (November eleventh), the year's greatest slaughter takes place before winter sets in. It is typically followed by another communal feast, at which much meat is served and — in northern Christendom — roast apples are traditionally eaten.

On the Feast of Saint Nicolas (December sixth), many towns appoint a "boy bishop" — usually chosen by the lesser clergy of the borough — who rules for a day, or sometimes until the end of Christmas. This lad is taken about the town in a wagon or on a horse, arrayed as a real bishop, and raucous plays and songs are performed for his amusement. At Mass he sits in the bishop's chair in the cathedral, and in some places the child preaches the sermon, or even blasphemously performs the Mass himself.

## Twelve Days of Christmas

Running from the Feast of the Nativity of Christ (December twenty-fifth) through to Epiphany (January sixth), these are all holidays, and are celebrated in a variety of manners in different lands and by different peoples.

It is an indoor time of eating and drinking. Tenants are usually fed by their lords for at least one great meal. Minstrels and storytellers amuse revellers, and individual days have their own peculiar entertainments.

On the Feast of Saint Stephen (December twenty-sixth), for example, it is sometimes customary that a group of dogs tear apart a fox tied to a pole in the center of the feasting hall. At Childermas (December twenty-seventh), some communities ritually beat their young children in commemoration of the massacre of the Innocents. On the Feast of the Circumcision (January first), noble families sometimes exchange gifts, or lords give token presents to their subordinates. At Epiphany, peasants choose a king and queen (called the King of the Bean and the Queen of the Pea), who are responsible for organizing the day's entertainments and marking all the houses' rafters with a crucifix to ward off evil. After paying for all his fellows' drinks, the king is rewarded by being hurled into a pond.

Masks, absurdities and deceptions are commonplace over these twelve days. The masked marauders of May Day again tour the inns and taverns. Lords of Misrule — appointed by local lords — arrange minstrels and dances. They also designate certain people to play the fool, to ridicule and address all but the highest-born with irreverent mockery. Sometimes these fools even shout and lark about



during Mass. Plays are performed by masked players, usually bawdy tales of comic heroism. A lord may place his young son in his own seat at dinner for these twelve days, and masters may pretend to be their servants' servants.

All of these feasts are excellent times for performers and players, minstrels, jongleurs, dancers, both professional

and amateur, who find most of their employment at this part of the year. It is also a time for people to abstain from drudgery and to enjoy each others' company.

Yet still, people may sometimes go too far, I fear. They may become irreverent, or even blasphemous. They may forget that their holidays are, after all, Holy Days.



Jean and Boyce strained under the weight of the branch, as they slipped and clambered up the hillside, the dawn glittering off the cold autumn dew. At the summit, Lionel and his son had already set to work with pick and shovel.

"You're always here first, Lionel." Boyce grunted as he let his burden fall. "There's no rush. We've plenty of time."

"My father watched over the shepherd-making," Lionel swung his pick aggressively, without pause, "and his father before him. . . We've always taken the responsibility. . . And so we start work first and finish last. . . That's how it's done."

Boyce grinned at the elder's son, who shrugged sheepishly and continued with his digging.

"This branch alright for the leg?" Jean inquired. Lionel paused briefly to glance at it.

"He's got to stand on it from tonight until Spring comes. It looks bent to me."

"It's fine!" Boyce sighed.

"If the Wooden Shepherd falls, the harvest suffers. And it'll be your fault."

"Come on, Boyce," Jean muttered, "let's get the other leg. Or we won't be finished for the Father's prayers at dusk."

"To the Devil with that! I just don't want to delay the feast."

And they set off down the hill, leaving Lionel to dig the foundations for the Giant as his family had done for as many Halloweens as anyone remembered.



The little procession wound its way through the darkened woods and up the slope to the foot of the cliff, their torches dancing across the cave mouth. At the head of the column the village provost, dressed in animal skins and crowned with a stag's antlers, stood aside to let the pallbearers enter.

Inside the cave a bed of hay and rushes had been laid at the beginning of Lent, and the empty coffin was laid upon it, a crown of thorns on its lid. Other villagers entered one at a time to leave their offerings — eggs, cheese, bread, ale, flowers, green spring boughs, and little wooden figures — before the coffin. Then, still in silence, the procession returned to the village and their beds.

Two days passed, and on the night before the Feast of the Resurrection, four of the village's eldest men returned to the cave and carried the coffin and crown away. As the priest had told them to, the women came to the tomb on the third day to find it empty; and so it would be again.

On the following morning, after Mass, the whole village walked out to the cave through the woodlands, led by the women. All around them the land began to wake after winter, birds building nests, fresh green sprouting from bare branches. Through its own private Easter mystery, the village wondered at the miracle of resurrection.









he Duke of Swabia, at the time that I met him, was some thirty-five years old. Although I have met many knights and other dignitaries, I have never seen anyone as handsome as he. He was so perfectly formed that no one could praise him too much, and he loved those things which he ought to love, and hated what it became him to hate.

He was prudent in matters of warfare and government, full of enterprise and wisdom. He never allowed men of abandoned character about his court, was most disciplined and deeply pious, keeping frequent nocturnals to the Virgin and the Holy Ghost. He would speak openly with any of his subjects, always giving sound advice and bearing in mind their council, and entertained ambassadors without the need of a translator, as he spoke not only his own German tongue but also the Tuscan of north Italy and impeccable French.

The Duke was a man of great charity, having each day twelve pennies in farthings distributed to all comers at his castle gate. Those noble men who came to serve at court always received some gift from him when they departed, and he was both liberal and courteous in these gifts, knowing how to receive as well as to give.

He loved dogs above all other animals; and through the warmer months he displayed his great skill at hunting. Throughout the year he entertained many minstrels, being himself proficient at this science, and hosted many great banquets. Yet he never indulged in any foolish or ridiculous extravagance, and kept careful check upon his accounts of expenditure.

At midnight, when he left his chambers to dine, twelve torch bearers accompanied him in great splendor. The hall was full of knights and squires, and there were many places laid out for any who might wish to dine with him.

None spoke to him at dinner unless he first spoke to them, and all ate heartily of the excellent meals provided by his kitchen, and particularly the poultry which he delighted in. Remaining at his table for two hours, he showed measured delight whenever a fancy dish might be served up to him, for although he did not desire to eat of them he had them served to his knights and squires.

In brief, I must say that although I have visited many courts, I never found one which pleased me more, nor was I anywhere so impressed by feats of arms. Noblemen were to be seen in every chamber discussing arms and armor. Every honorable endeavor was conducted there. All wisdom from distant lands came thither, for the glory of the court had brought together noble souls from every part of Christendom.



These are the words of His Grace the Archbishop of Mainz, to all ecclesiastics within his jurisdiction, be they secular or monastic.

The order of all things must be known to every man, and each shall be honored according to his proper station. Too much has been said of the superiority of the temporal and spiritual lords, one over the other, and His Grace wishes all to understand the proper order of men, free from bias or political concern.

To understand the order ordained by God is of value in itself. Yet to know who is superior or inferior to another may furnish many practical benefits. Those of higher rank should always be greeted before the lessers in their company, even though it be one less worthy who would be addressed. Those of greater estate should be given higher seats at table, finer wine and the choicest foods, and none should be seated before those more worthy have sat. When celebrating mass, those of the highest rank present should take the sacrament immediately after the celebrants; inferiors should fall silent whenever their betters choose to speak.

These self-evident courtesies should be upheld without exception, and only a rustic or buffoon would flout them. Since neither monk nor clergyman should be held ignorant nor foolish, His Grace is anxious that all should understand the rightful order of men.

The estate of the Pope has no peer, and even the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire is next to him. A ruler of a kingdom is nearest to the Emperor; rulers of great lands, like France, are above the overlords of lesser realms (though some maintain the precedence of the King of Jerusalem). Next in dignity is a Cardinal of the Holy Church, then a king's son or an archbishop (these being of equal worth).

A blood relation to a king is next, and then a count or duke paying homage to a greater lord. Next and equal to one and other stand a bishop, an earl or other great magnate, though the master of a holy order might sometimes be revered above these both. Then comes a papal legate, a baron, or an abbot. Below these are the men raised up by



monarchs to oversee the justice or taxation of their lands, and peer to them the mayor of a great city. Then the prior of a cathedral or a knight with his own lands, and with them the doctor of divinity or law.

After these there comes a prior, dean, arch=deacon and a landless knight, doctor of medicine and doctor of arts. Next comes the body of the gentry who own land, clergymen and those in holy orders, those holding degrees of a university, mayors of lesser cities, and their like. Beneath these are the men above the rabble, but still of little note, such as the sergeant=at=arms, the ex=mayor of a great city, heralds, lawyers, worshipful merchants, rich artificers, and any man well=nurtured and of good manners.

Beneath this come only peasants, and though the freeman be above the serf all are but peasants still, and of no regard in gentle company.

It is regrettable but true that in some lands these orders are confused, and men of mean estate eat and converse as equals with the worthy. Any man who travels would do well to enquire what peculiarities of custom must be observed wherever he tarries. In Lombardy, to wit, the greatest merchants are fancied to be as barons. In England the king appoints a Sheriff in each county, and the Sheriff may be set above a baron. And in many lands the favor of a king might raise a man above his formal level.



## The Thirty-One Rules of Courtly Love

- I Marriage is no excuse for not loving.
- II One who is not jealous cannot love.
- III No one can be bound by two loves.
- IV Love is always decreasing or increasing.
- V A true lover takes nothing against the will of the beloved.
- VI Boys do not love until they reach the age of maturity.
- VII When one lover dies, the other should mourn for two years before loving again.
- VIII No one should be refused love without adequate reason.
- IX No one can love unless compelled by love alone.
- X True love is never tainted by avarice.
- XI A man should not marry a woman he would be ashamed to ask to marry.
- XII A true lover desires the embrace only of his beloved.
- XIII When made public, love rarely survives.
- XIV Love easily gained is of little value, while that attained with difficulty is prized.
- XV One turns pale in the presence of one's beloved.
- XVI One's heart flutters at the sight of one's beloved.
- XVII New love overcomes old love.
- XVIII It is only his character which makes a man worthy of love.
- XIX If love fails it rarely recovers.
- XX A man in love is always fearful of his lover's constancy.
- XXI Greater jealousy causes greater love.
- XXII Love, through jealousy, is increased by suspicion.
- XXIII The lover eats and sleeps very little.
- XXIV A lover performs all things thinking of his beloved.
- XXV A true lover does only that which may please his beloved.
- XXVI A lover can deny nothing to the beloved.
- XXVII A lover never grows tired of his beloved.
- XXVIII A lover suspects his beloved at the slightest cause.
- XXIX A man with many worries cannot love.
- XXX A true lover thinks of his beloved at all times, without respite.
- XXXI Nothing forbids a woman from being loved by two men, nor a man by two women.



These are the words of His Grace the Archbishop of Mainz, to all ecclesiastics within his jurisdiction, and to all temporal lords.

There has been much debate concerning sorcery and magics, and many are uncertain as to the acceptability of such practices. While the laws of the Empire decree that all who practice magic must be put to death, this law is nowhere observed, and all manner of magicians roam the lands at whim.

The Holy Scripture tells us "You shall not permit a Sorceress to live" (Exodus 22); it is known that King Saul had all wonder-workers expelled from Israel; ancient stories tell how the blessed Saint Peter opposed the pagan Simon Magus. But still, the same King Saul consulted with the notorious Witch of Endor, and the evangelist tells us that it was "magi" who first came to honor Christ's birth.

Nonetheless, many holy men have written that sorcery is accomplished by commanding demons, and their opinions are authoritative. Indeed, we hear that when Simon Magus attempted to fly, he was borne up by invisible demons, which Saint Peter's prayers dispelled.

However, while sorcery is clearly blasphemous — and must justly be punishable by death — there are other petty magics which cannot be viewed so harshly. Barely a single village does not have some "wise woman" or cunning man, whose charms and herbs are said to cure illness and protect from harm. Alchemy may be regarded as a science, questionable only in that it derives from the pagan Moors, whose writings are often blasphemous. Astrology and other forms of prediction are acceptable, unless the practitioner claims that the stars dictate the course of human events. This is a vile blasphemy, and may be punishable by death.

The rants and remedies of village magicians may be regarded as acceptable, so long as the practitioner does not use the names of demons, for they are just harmless mutterings and foolish superstitions.



Indeed, the peasant practice of using herbs to heal is not so different from the methods of more respectable physicians, and in advising prayer to protect or heal they display an admirable piety.

However, while these practices are to be tolerated, other magics are wholly unacceptable. These criminal and blasphemous enchantments may be considered sorcery — and thus diabolism — and should be punished harshly, by excommunication for clerics and execution for the laity.

Any attempt to call up or communicate with the dead, the so-called art of Necromancy, is blasphemous sorcery. The learned writers of the Church are all agreed that it is not possible to call up the departed. The "necromancer" instead summons demons who appear in the guise of the dead spirit. This and any other attempt to invoke, petition or cajole the spirits of demons should be punished with all severity.

Magics designed to cause harm may be regarded as unlawful. Magicians who use wax images, malign curses, or other harmful charms should be punished as sorcerers. Many of these people employ in their magics wood from gallows or the bodies of animals, but worse than these are those who use human remains. Vilest of all are those who desecrate holy symbols or use consecrated bread from a holy Mass.

Lastly, charms designed to cause love are unacceptable. Some have argued that a woman may use magics to ensure the constancy of her husband, arguing that this prevents adultery, so is laudable. But, in fact, all "love magics" are sorcerous, as they interfere with human free will, and are thus blasphemies against God.

Moreover, any lay person who maliciously makes a charge of sorcery or witchcraft which cannot be substantiated should suffer the penalty prescribed for the alleged crime: death. Only a lord, judge or member of the Church may make allegations without risk to their own lives, should the charge be discredited.



And when we have renounced the world we have turned our hearts and minds toward God, and He has become our property and we His. If then our omnipotent Maker has deigned to become ours, then what more wealth might we ask when we possess this matchless treasure?

So how, Oh Brother monk, do we take Christ to ourselves? First we must banish from our cells all property and lucre, holding all in common and nothing individually, for if we hold to mere earthly riches our prize beyond price will slip from our grasps, and with Mammon banished to fill others' halls Christ enters into the empty cell of our hearts.

For Christ is our redeemer and reward, the promiser and the prize, life and eternity, and upon him we may cast all our cares, and with him we may know the joy of prayer. He is the food of our souls, and through feasts of meditation we are refreshed.

And to this great treasure, Christ our Lord, we must cling tenaciously. Our confinement in this community is no dark prison, therefore, but a fortress wherein we guard our prize, and also a monument whereby we honor him in art and prayer, so that those who roam hither and thither without our walls leave our safe confines to become vulnerable to the world and its worthless distractions, so that they cease to find joy in the recitation of psalms, in quiet contemplation or the rite of Mass, and seek to avoid the nightly vigils and nighttime offices, speak when silence is proper, eat food which breaks our fast, and evade the toil of travail.

Let the true monk, who seeks only perfection in the light of Christ, therefore confine himself to the cloister, avoid the contamination of the world, and mortify the flesh and nourish the soul.

It is our place to repress all vices of the flesh, the itchings of our palate and the desires of our loins, the lures toward avarice, greed and gluttony — for the body is a mass of putrefaction, nothing but worms, filth and ashes, a vile coil doomed to dust and death. The tongue must be stilled, the eye made to look away from unclean things, the foot placed not on idle wanderings, the hand turned to diligent travail. Be content with garments mean and few, the hard bed, the restrictions of the fast. Thus, through mortification of the flesh do we seize the arms of the virtues — sobriety, humility, patience, obedience, chastity, charity — and elevate our souls above all worldly things and all merely human relationships.



And so we fight not for fields and cities, kingdoms and crowns, but for our souls, which shall thereby be brought to eternal life through Christ our Lord. We do not resent suffering, for we do not shirk to follow in the footsteps of our Lord, to share his nakedness, his scourging and his sacrifice.

And when we doubt or are ignorant, when we are uncertain or afraid, then above all is the time to turn to God and pray, weeping. When we feel that we falter or cannot find the way, never do we receive more certainty than through pious tears. For tears are the most perfect mediators between God and man. Sweeter than honeycomb, sweeter than nectar are tears, as through the mortification of our spirits in prayer do we cleanse ourselves. No worldly art or wisdom is of compare.



# THE SECOND JOURNEY

## CHAPTER FIVE

The second journey which I shall relate is of interest because it involves an account of a visit to a magnate's court. On this journey I was privileged to attend a sumptuous noble feast and observe the daily life of the court, and I was lucky enough to observe a tournament.

In truth, the visit to the court was not the purpose of the journey, however.

Our esteemed abbot called me to his rooms, and asked if I would be willing to carry a package to a monastery in northern Italy. Of course, it is not my place to argue with my abbot, and if he decides that I am suited for a particular task, I shall strive to fulfill his instructions. I swore that I would do whatever I could to serve him.

He explained that our monastery had borrowed two exemplars — plain, densely written texts, from which proper books may be copied — which we were obliged to return. With these texts the abbot wished to send two further books, copied from our own library, as gifts in gratitude for the loan. These books had to be taken to a certain Di Trento Abbey in the Alps, and I should carry with them a letter asking that we might negotiate further exchanges.

The abbot asked if I was familiar with our own collection of books, and hearing that I was he empowered me to select such books as I might feel would add to our library

from those offered by the Abbey di Trento. Unsure that I was worthy of such trust, I nonetheless promised to obey the abbot's instructions.

The abbot had a brother with fair handwriting scribe a letter which he dictated, commending me to the abbot in di Trento, showing due courtesy and concern for his abbey, and asking if we might take further exemplars from their library.

In order to find the abbey, I was instructed to search out one Brother Mathias, who would be staying for several weeks at the court of the Duke of Swabia. I was told that the Duke's constantly traveling court might be intercepted at the castle of one Baron Frederick von Waldsee, to which I was given directions.

And so, armed with a stout walking stave and faith in Christ and the saints, carrying the books and letter as instructed, I set out on my journey as soon as I had made my confession and heard Mass.

## Background

Since I was to meet this brother at the Duke of Swabia's court, it was felt that I should have some background understanding of the nobleman. The prior therefore unearthed a letter from our store of books, in which the Duke was described.



A copy of this letter I have included here, not so that the reader might understand the Duke better, but so that you may understand the sort of things which men are accustomed to say about their betters. The letter does not in fact describe the Duke as he was, but rather presents him as the writer thought he should be.

It may be noted, for example, that while the letter speaks of the Duke's musical accomplishments and piety, I never heard any whisper that he understood the science of music or could play any instrument, and his chaplain often bemoaned his brevity at prayer. Other discrepancies will doubtless become apparent as the journey unfolds.

## The Duke's Court

After one week of travel, I arrived at the castle around noon and found it alive with activity. The Duke's forerunners had arrived the previous night to warn of his approach, although the visit had been planned well in advance, and now the final preparations were made to ensure that a proper welcome awaited him.

The Baron von Waldsee had vacated his own chamber for his lord, and servants were moving many of his own possessions into a guest chamber. Several houses near the castle had been requisitioned for use by the Duke's house-

hold, and a score of thatchers and carpenters were completing the temporary corridors and buildings which would link the houses together into a single sprawling unit.

Extra stabling was being secured in barns nearby for the Duke's horses, and many of the Baron's mounts had already been sent to a neighboring estate in order to make more room in the castle's own stable.

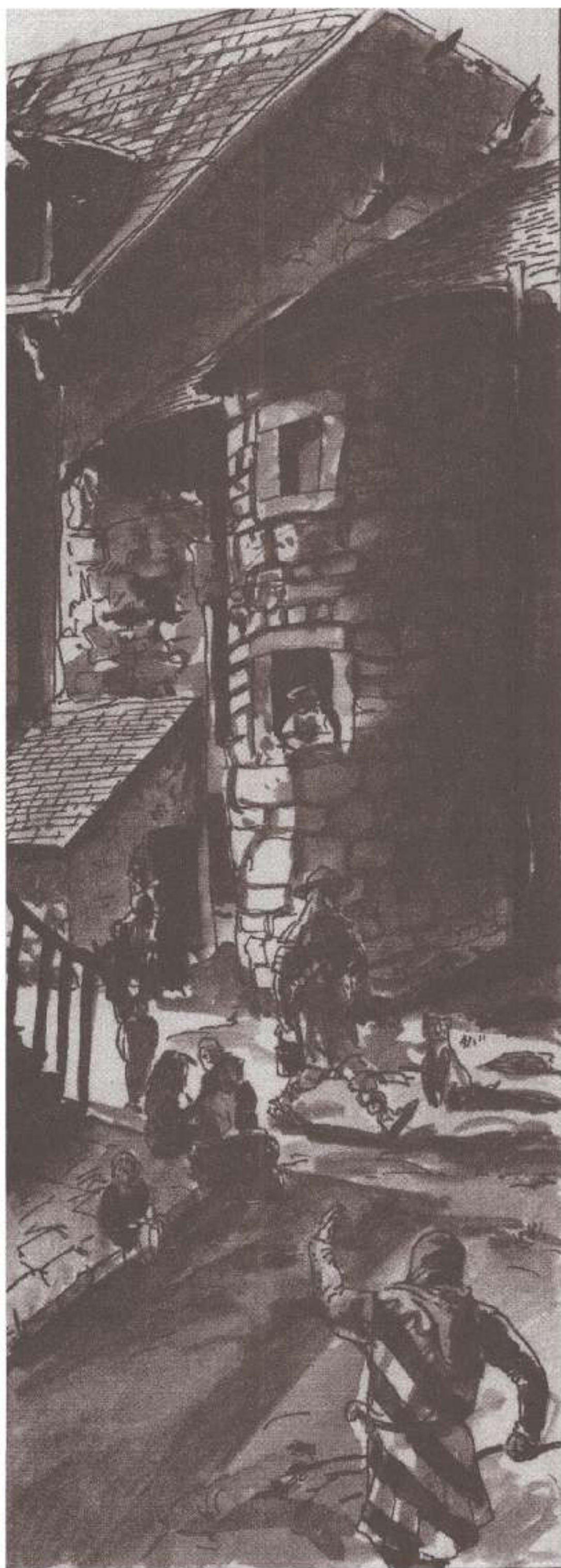
Entertainers tuned instruments, argued with their fellows or practiced if they could find a quiet spot in the castle or nearby inn.

Fresh animals were herded up the road to the castle and slaughtered in the courtyard for the evening's banquet, or else kept in pens outside, for later meals. Merchants and farmers argued with the Baron's steward about payment for wares they had brought — wine and beer, spices and salt, firewood and livestock — and a notary conducted a lucrative trade, writing out documents which promised a belated payment for more expensive cargoes.

Since I knew no one and had nothing to do before the Duke's entourage arrived, I sought out the priest of the village which lay in the shadow of the castle. I found him in his house, and he immediately offered me his hospitality for the night. I gladly accepted — expecting the village inn to be both crowded and expensive that night — and we fell to







talking. The conversation ranged across news of the lands about us, to church politics, to his baron, merchants, opulence and greed. Much of the afternoon passed amiably.

## The Duke's Arrival

As we sat in the father's house we heard a commotion without, first made by the eager shouts of villagers and then by the clatter and creaking of scores of horses and carts. The Duke's train was entering town, on the way up the hill to the castle.

First came a mounted herald, a knight crying the Duke's name and demanding that the street be cleared; then came six horsemen in metal armor; next came the Duke himself, accompanied by two dozen nobles and ecclesiastics, all armed and mounted but none of them armored; then came eight ladies, two sitting "side saddle" but most riding in the usual manner; next were two "chariots" (covered wagons) in which the Duke's wife and mother rode with their chosen ladies; then, after two more horsemen, came a score of servants on foot or driving carts or leading pack-horses; and finally there were two more mounted soldiers.

The column passed with an informal dignity, and the villagers paused in the fields or came into the street to watch it pass. They stood in awe and whispered amongst themselves, but one boy, too young to know fear, rushed toward the Duke and fell into step beside the lord's stallion. The Duke looked down at the boy and smiled (and the courtiers laughed and smiled as well), and asked how he could help his small subject.

Too young to notice the Duke's tone, the lad asked if it were true that he were rich. The Duke laughed and said that God had granted him custody of the land, but that he must apportion it amongst his people and protect them. The simple child asked in response if he himself might be given some land. The Duke remarked that when he were older he would doubtless inherit his father's holding, but seeing that the lad was not satisfied he laughed again and had a courtier toss the boy a farthing. At this the villagers' children all rushed forward, and the courtier cast a handful of coppers amongst them so that they scattered like chickens chasing corn.

It was at this time that I noticed a Benedictine monk, riding with the nobles but not near the Duke. He pulled away from the column and greeted me with some reserve, asking if I was Brother Peter of Aalen. I said that I was, checked that he was Brother Mathias, and agreed to meet with him later when he had settled in. He rejoined the Duke's train, and I returned to conclude my discussion with the father.





## Meeting Brother Mathias

At the castle gate the guards were notably alert, but not nervous, and stopped me briefly to ask my business. I simply explained who I was and who I sought, and glancing at my habit and tonsure, they let me pass. Perhaps if I had been a layman they would have questioned me further.

In the castle courtyard the wagons were unloading and the horses being groomed. The quantity of luggage was amazing, and included a vast store of tapestries (sufficient to cover all of the walls of the Duke's chamber), several large folding beds for the most senior nobles, a stack of mattresses, numerous pillows, quilts and embroidered blankets, linen sheets, bundles of armor and iron-clad trunks full of clothes. Other smaller and more personal items were also being unloaded, such as a lute belonging to one of the courtiers, three cages containing hawking birds, two well-wrapped books, and wooden boxes containing goblets. No doubt jewelry, coin, and other easily portable valuables were kept by particular servants and had already been taken inside.

Inside the castle there was a great deal of bustle and urgency, as the household attempted to settle in before the evening's banquet. I found that I could move almost wherever I wished. Overcoming my idle curiosity, I sought out Brother Mathias, asking any servant who passed if they had seen him.

I found the brother in the chapel, although by his furrowed brow I guessed that he was not concerned with the divine. I sat next to him, without disturbing him, and waited for him to turn to me, as is proper when a brother may be at prayer.

The brother turned to me shortly with a smile and a nod, and gestured that we might go outside. Once out of the chapel he greeted me formally, inquiring after the health of my abbot, the state of our abbey, the nature of my journey, and other matters, all with tact and courtesy.

Once such pleasantries were complete I began to ask him about the nature of the Duke's court and his role in it, and began to understand a little more of noble politics.

## Brother Mathias and the Court

The brother was a stout man, around forty years old, with a dry wit and a courtier's reserve. He could answer the most direct question, apparently with candor, and yet give no real answer.

As a child he had been sent to become a monk, and in his youth he came to accompany his abbot on journeys to other monasteries, and to the courts of bishops, archbishops, and even the Pope himself. Meanwhile, he had secured





his abbot's approval that while his brothers labored in the fields or at their crafts he might work in the cloisters, studying the works of great saints and theologians — Augustine, Anselm, Gratian, Peter Lombard, Bernard of Clairvaux and other great men.

In recent years Brother Mathias had come to be sent as a delegate to the courts of northern Italy and southern Germany, and then came to act as a mediator in disputes between the Pope's legates and the local nobility. Brother Mathias' abbot, it seemed, had ties of kinship with certain secular lords, and the Abbey di Trento sought patronage from both north and south of the Alps. Thus it had become embroiled in the empire's politics.

The greatest argument in the empire was, and still is, who was actually superior in worldly matters, the Pope or secular lords — and in particular, who had the right to choose successive emperors, the papacy or the dukes. None would deny that the Pope is the head of the Church and undisputed master of all things spiritual. The disagreement concerned whether or not this rank conferred ultimate worldly power as well. The Pope's supporters claimed that he had this power, and the Emperor's men asserted they were free of his jurisdiction, both enlisting the arguments of learned men like Mathias to help them.

The Pope claimed that just as the soul directs and activates the limbs and organs of the human body, so the spiritual lord — the Pope — should articulate the arms of the secular state. As Bernard of Clairvaux wrote, *"The Kings of Germany, England, France, Spain and Jerusalem, with all the clergy and the people, cleave and adhere to the lord Pope, as sons to fathers, as members to the head."*

The secular magnates, however, concerned to safeguard their power and independence, denied that they owed any filial obedience to the Pope. They argued in response that the kingdoms and earth and heaven are quite distinct, quoting the words of our saviour Jesus Christ, *"render unto Caesar those things which are Caesar's and unto God those things which are God's."*

Both the Pope and the secular lords sought to prove their arguments with reference to the Holy Scriptures, Church Fathers, saints and theologians, and Mathias was sent from his abbey to lend the Duke his expert knowledge. I understand that the Duke of Swabia gave a sizable donation to the abbey in return for the Brother's services, as well as supplying him with full board and lodging and an allowance for candles and wine.

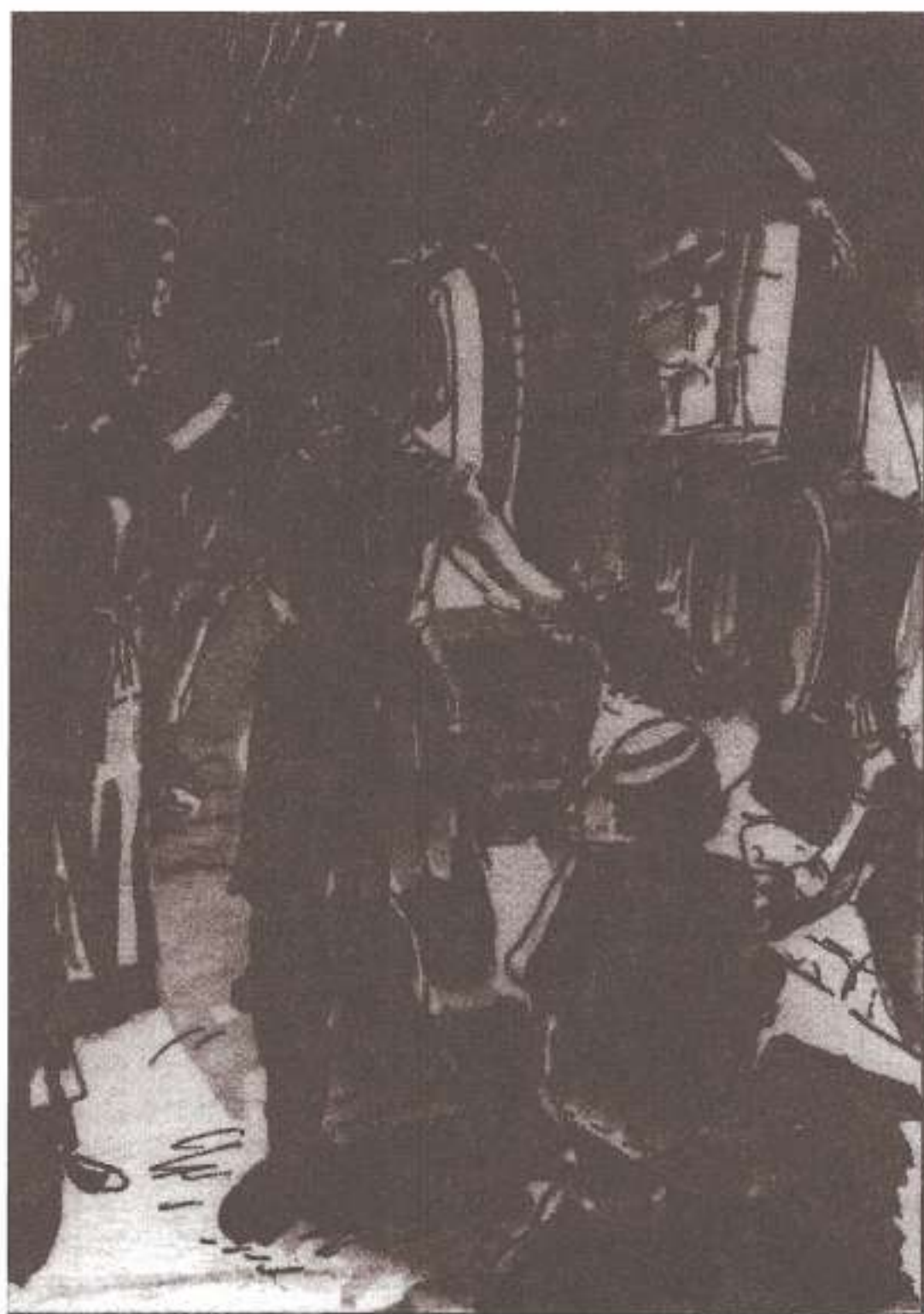
In all honesty, however, I must say that I found the whole argument quite baffling. I would advise brothers to avoid discussing such subjects in public, lest they thereby earn themselves unnecessary enemies.

## Introduction at Court

After I spoke with Brother Mathias for some time, he led me to a certain nobleman who ensured that proper hospitality was given to the Duke's guests.

We found this man — who was nothing less than a baron himself — supervising the unpacking of the final wagon. When he was at last free, we approached him. Brother Mathias introduced me, and the lord bade me welcome, asking a few polite questions concerning my journey. He then established that I acted on behalf of my abbot and accompanied Brother Mathias, and said that he would find me lodgings in the village. I replied that I already had a place for that evening but would require a room for subsequent nights.

The nobleman informed me that a banquet would be held in the Duke's honor that evening, and that as the Duke's guest I would obviously be welcome. Thus formally accepted into the household, I withdrew with Brother Mathias and we spoke together until two hours before midnight, when a servant alerted us that dinner would soon be served.





# The Banquet

In the castle's great hall, five tables had been laid, the high table on a dais at the end and the others in two parallel rows down the length of the room, with three further tables set in adjoining rooms for the least notable of diners.

The Duke entered the hall first, parading across the castle courtyard in his finest clothes, with eight torch-bearers. He took his seat in Baron Frederick's own chair, at the center of the high table. When he was seated the rest of the diners entered, some washing their hands or faces from the scented bowls provided by the door, others moving directly to their seats.

Most of the guests had been tactfully told where they might sit before the meal — so that there were no arguments or embarrassments when they entered — and several noble servants were on hand to ensure that everyone sat where they ought. I myself posed something of a problem for them, since I unofficially accompanied one of the Duke's companions. So Baron Frederick's servants had to decide whether I should be seated with the other clerics, or given a superior seat, and they evidently decided that I should sit with Brother Mathias, who always occupied a place greater than any monk has a right to expect. In truth, I found the placing rather embarrassing, as I did not feel that I merited such respect.

The Duke presided on the high table; a bishop and several powerful nobles sat to his left and right with their ladies, eating from silver plates as they looked out along the hall. Several servants, all of them nobles, loitered by the table with towels over their arms, serving food and wine, cleaning up spills from the table or from the diners' clothes, relaying messages to those on lower tables, or simply providing an innocuous guard for the Duke. The Baron von Waldsee himself was notably absent from the table, as he moved around the hall and kitchen throughout the meal, overseeing the servants.

Next in merit were those seated nearest to the high table, on the Duke's right. This table, called the "*Rewarde*," was served with the same dishes as the high table, with fine French wines and pure white salt. Here eleven nobles dined, including a minor baron, several knights and the Duke's daughter, along with a prior.

Brother Mathias and I sat at the "Second Mess," the table nearest to the Duke, on his left hand side and opposite the *Rewarde*, a table containing mainly landless knights who followed the Duke. Not a table without honor, a large silver salt cellar sat at its center, although the contents were coarse and rather brown. In any case, I had none of the salt, as some rough noble insisted on dipping his meat into it (as well as wiping his chin on the tablecloth and picking his ears with his finger). No protest at his ill-manners dissuaded him.

Below us were the Third and Fourth Messes, where several clergymen, friars and monks sat, with two local mayors, the nobles' respected servants, the sergeant of the

Duke's guard, important merchants and various others. All of the other guests — another forty in total — sat on even lesser tables, which the hall was too small to hold. These tables accommodated the Duke's guards, minor merchants and the bailiff from the village.

The banquet began when the First Remove (or set of dishes) was carried in, and a young roast deer was placed before the Duke's table. This was carved ceremoniously by a young Italian knight, and the meat was placed upon platters and carried to all of the tables. The other dishes of that remove soon followed, including wild duck, served in a vivid saffron sauce (which only the top two tables ate), broiled beef, a mutton stew, and chicken in almonds and red wine.

Each diner was presented with a trencher (a flat, heavy slab of brown bread) to use as a plate, and between every two guests was placed a platter, as is usual, which they divided between themselves. Respectfully, a servant asked myself and Brother Mathias if we would take red meat, and although I fear my companion was tempted I immediately answered that as monks we could only eat pale meat. In truth, this was no great hardship, as we still ate seven different dishes. Regrettably, some others at the banquet (such as the prior on the *Rewarde*) were tempted to forego their vows and ate whatever delicacies were offered.

The Second Remove was indistinguishable from the First, except that a different selection of dishes was offered. However, as a centerpiece to the feast a roast peacock was brought in, its head and magnificent tail garlanding the dish. Everyone admired the bird. As a token, a little meat was prized from the carcass for those at the top two tables, but the flesh of the bird is notoriously tough and indigestible, and it was largely for show.

The Final Remove consisted of sweet dishes, including several pies, a quite sickeningly sweet serving of honeyed stewed plums, and bowls of assorted nuts.

When the meal was all but done, the Duke stood, thanked Baron Frederick and the other noble servants for the feast, praised the food, and called for his servants to bring a sign of his appreciation. At this, eight men entered from the rear of the hall with torches, one carrying a handsome hunting hawk, another with a carved wooden box containing two silver goblets. The Baron received the gifts gratefully, and knelt in homage to his lord.

The meal thus completed, those who were able to leave did so, and the others were left where they lay as the soiled trenchers were collected and distributed to the beggars outside.

## During the Banquet

Conversations at banquets vary wildly, some being far too rarefied and learned for a simple monk, others being coarse, mindless and base. The mood of the feast and the



individuals with whom one sits determine the conversation, and guests should be prepared to be shocked, insulted, entertained or inspired.

This banquet provided an excellent example of these contrasts, and a brief description of the evening follows, as an illustration, which I pray readers not to consider mere self-indulgence.

On my left hand was a group of swaggering young nobles who served the Duke in war or as servants, or were simply fed and lodged in return for swelling the ranks of his entourage. No sooner had the first dish been brought in than they were embarked upon a boorish competition. Each in turn would give one of the Thirty-One Rules of Courtly Love, and if any of them should be unable to remember a rule, he had to down a pint of beer in one breath.

As the meal progressed, it became clear that these nobles could not remember more than half the rules, and that the whole contest had merely been an excuse to quaff the Duke's fine beer. They also illustrated that most nobles' understanding of courtly love is purely theoretical. The same man who repeated the adage, "The lover eats and sleeps very little," loudly praised his wife between generous handfuls of food, and slept at his seat from midnight until the following noon. Likewise, the man who remembered, "Love easily gained is of little value," spent much of the evening plotting to bed a succession of serving wenches — until he too passed out, without a single successful conquest.

To my right, however, sat two professional men: the Duke's physician and a theologian. This latter gained degrees in Arts and Theology in Bologna and, having somehow offended the Pope, now served the Duke in some capacity. I believe he was employed partly in an administrative role, partly to oversee the priests and chaplains appointed by the Duke, and partly to advise the Duke in his relations with the Church. Indeed, it may have been that both he and Brother Mathias were propagandists of a sort, writing letters and tracts asserting the Duke and Emperor's powers against the Pope.

In any case, the main conversation between these scholars seemed to be the writings of the ancient Greek called Aristotle, whose works are much prized by the schools and universities. However, they also spoke of astrology, the nature of beasts and other topics. All of these matters left me bemused, reflecting upon my own lack of learning, although Brother Mathias seemed at home with such subject matter.

## The Entertainments

In certain noble circles, particularly in Italy and southern France, it is considered proper to remain silent while each remove is consumed. In this silence minstrels and musicians are supposed to serenade the diners, so that just

as monks hear holy sounds and divine words at meals in monasteries, so lay lords hear beautiful sounds and tales of courtly ideals.

The Duke of Swabia was a man of the older cast, however, and had no wish to muffle his guests' conversations. Yet Baron von Waldsee had arranged a number of entertainments, which are worthy of note.

A group of tumblers leaped and spun in the center of the floor, a nimble fellow first leaping from the shoulders of one fellow to those of another, then balancing on one hand upon another's head, then turning somersaults through the air, and then combining these maneuvers. Later, these returned to the hall again, purely for the benefit of the lower Messes, and performed a similar routine but standing on the tables, so that those seated beneath roared with nervous laughter, cowering from each potential fall.

There was also a man who performed magic tricks, who went from table to table repeating his routine so that all could see. He caused an owl to appear from an empty basket, made metal balls vanish from within locked caskets, and turned a stone into a frog. Less spectacularly, he performed a trick whereby a wooden ball was placed beneath one of three up-ended mugs, and these three were moved about. Although the mugs were moved slowly about the table so that one could easily tell which had originally had the sphere beneath it, still the ball never seemed to be where we expected.

And of course there were a considerable number of minstrels, storytellers and troubadours, each playing instruments or singing, telling tales or reciting poems and songs, according to their talents. The psaltry and harp, lute and gittern, fiddle and tabor, horn and pipes and the shawm all appeared, separately or in combinations, and some of the musicians were particularly fine. Songs of courtly love and valor were well-received by the high table, while songs of blood and lust were popular with the lower Messes, along with tales of bawd and brawn.

All of the entertainers, of course, performed first for the Duke, and then most moved down the hall, repeating their routine if necessary, and then moved out into side rooms to amuse the common folk. Some made only a nominal attempt to entertain the nobles, having been hired specifically for the rabble, while others performed only in front of the high table. Everyone was well-served by these fellows. My only regret was that some of the softer instruments (like the harp) could barely be heard above the conversation.

The Baron paid all of these folk, I suppose, but they also received money from elsewhere. One noble gave a purse of silver to a storyteller who had praised his own family in verse, and the Duke later presented an outstanding troubadour with a finely tooled belt and a gold ring.

Moreover, after the banquet, several performers loitered at the village inn, entertaining the Duke's retainers with slightly different routines in return for small donations. Some performers even returned on subsequent eve-

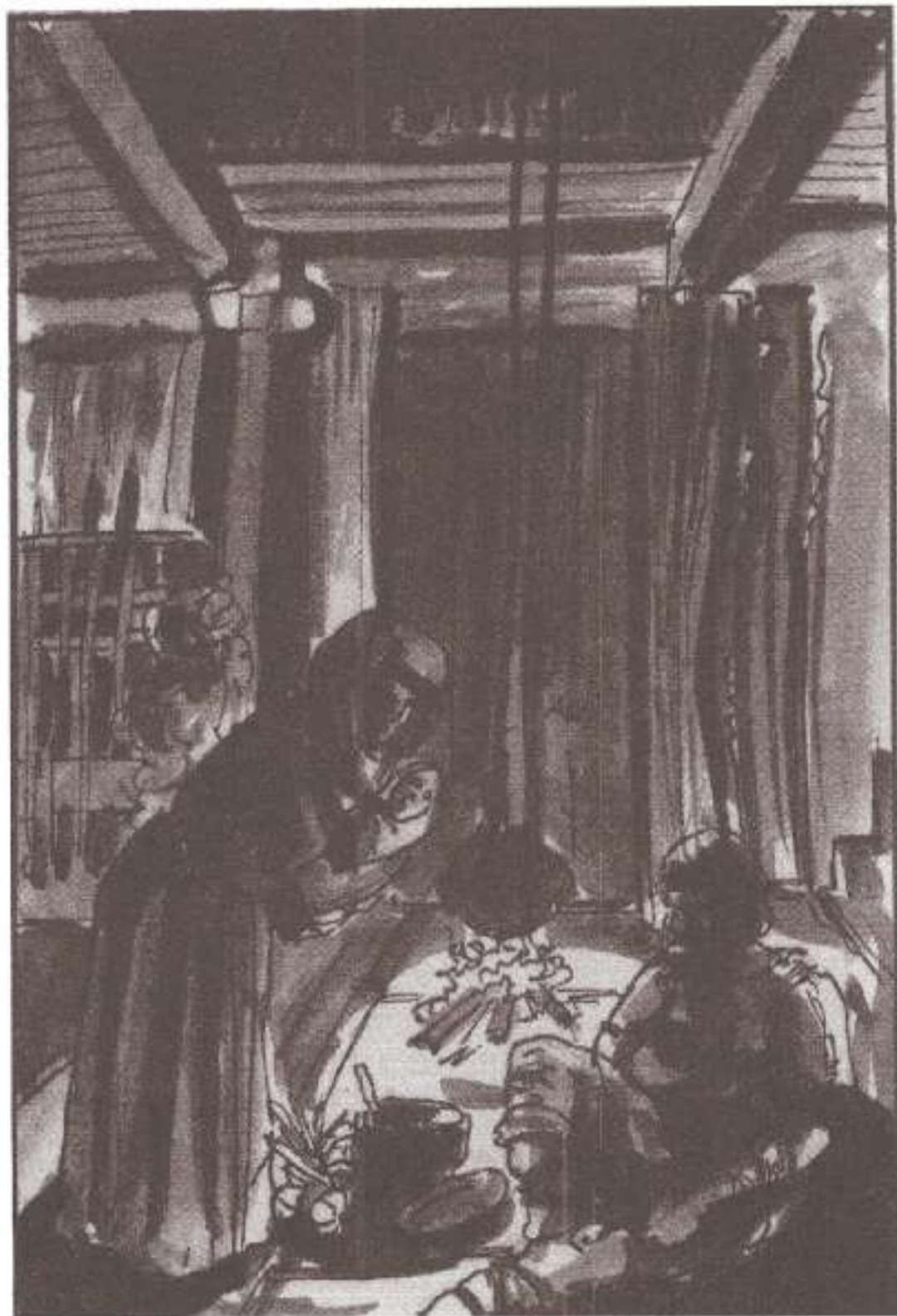


nings to entertain at dinner. Generally the stories and songs performed in the inn were cruder and more jovial than those presented to the Duke, the music faster and more rhythmic. The magician turned his "find the ball" trick into a form of gambling, wagering that others could not guess the ball's location, making a good many pennies from their failures. Likewise, one of the pipers put aside his flute and played lively dances on the bagpipes on the village green.

## Life at Court

I stayed at the court for about ten days while Brother Mathias concluded his duties for the Duke. During this period I had much time on my hands, but was more fortunate than many servants and courtiers. As a monk I at least knew the solace of prayer; I said the divine offices whenever I could with several of the other clerics present, and finding a finely illuminated copy of the gospels in the chapel, I then spent several hours each day reading.

The nobles at court filled their time with talking, practicing their skill at arms, and fulfilling their duties for their lord. Several other diversions, such as formal dancing and watching entertainers, were also available for those still unoccupied. Sadly, there was also a great deal of gaming, ranging from chess and backgammon to dice and pigsknuckles, and even the clergy sometimes indulged.



A day at court is punctuated by meals, as regularly as a monk's life is punctuated by the divine office — although less frequently. Breakfast is a simple informal meal, taken early or toward the middle of the morning, with many important courtiers eating separately in their chambers.

Lunch is a formal meal, lasting for over an hour, and is an opportunity for the Duke's subjects to approach him if they need to. Important visitors present themselves during the meal, and others ask favors or advice, or fix a time or date for a more lengthy meetings.

Before the Duke there came disputes over land, requests for tax exemption, fathers begging employment for their young sons, older nobles asking for a place at court, a group of friars asking endowment of a chapel, a baron seeking to bring a neighboring knight to trial on some offense, wandering entertainers begging leave to entertain, and several local nobles simply wishing to reaffirm their pledges of homage and to give small gifts to their lord. The Duke was usually courteous, though sometimes moody, and always gave a token gift to anyone who presented him with anything or performed a service for him. I am told that if a magnate is not generous in his gifts and magnificent in his lifestyle, his status and reputation suffer, rumors flourish that he is impoverished, and his vassals are less eager to serve him.

Among the gifts which I saw the Duke give and receive were plates and goblets, caged birds, prime cuts of red meat, the carcasses of game birds, a hunting dog, a fine gown, and a belt and buckle. Any luxury or noble utensil may be given as a gift, I am told, except for knives, which are deemed unsuitable or unlucky, perhaps because they may be thought harbingers of treachery or bloodshed.

The early afternoon was the least active part of the day, when many nobles caught up on the short night's sleep and dozed for an hour or two. As dusk approached the court became livelier, as many of its officers completed their day's duties and the majority of travelers arrived. Baron von Waldsee — whose castle this was, after all — sat in audience in the great hall to deal with his own day-to-day business. Soon after dusk the only people still working were those seeing to the new arrivals or preparing the evening meal, all others passing the evening at their leisure.

Dinner, served long after dark and shortly before midnight, was — and is — another formal meal, but this is an occasion for pageantry rather than business. The courtiers wore their finest garments and the cooks prepared their tastiest dishes, an entertainer was usually available to sing or play, and the Duke himself arrived splendidly accompanied by torch-bearers.

The food was always excellent at the court, and the Baron must have spent a vast amount of money to present such a prolonged extravagance. Had he provided mediocre fare he would have fallen in his lord's estimation, but by obvious extravagance he impressed his wealth and power upon his lord and peers. Even on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays, when the Church orders that only fish should be



eaten, there was often an amazing selection of food, including Baltic herring, preserved porpoise from Italy, beaver (which is called a fish on account of its tail), various seabirds (acceptable as they live over the sea), and countless fresh-water fish from the rivers and the Baron's stock-ponds.

## The Court's Followers

Just as an army often gathers a civilian train which follows in its wake, so a duke's court gains extra personnel as it moves about.

Some of these are troublesome in the extreme, such as the band of beggars which arrived mere hours after the Duke. They camped on the hillside below the castle, fighting over the scraps thrown to them from the Baron's kitchen and gladly accepting farthings from the charitable nobles.

Two beggars were caught attempting to steal milk from a villager's cow, and were beaten for their crime. Another was noticed taking a merchant's purse and was eventually tackled in the hue and cry which followed. The Baron ordered an eye to be pulled out for his crime, arguing that the crime stemmed from the sin of Avarice and citing a biblical precedent (Matthew 18 verse 9), which was doubly unfortunate since the fellow had lost an eye already for a similar crime, and now being blind was fit to do nothing but beg.

Eventually the vagabonds were driven from the area by the villagers, chased with clubs and stones, after a barn was broken into. When the vagrants later returned they were driven away on the Baron's orders. Although we had no further trouble from them, I wonder where they went and how they fared when they could not rely upon their duke's Christian charity.

A pedlar and potion-seller also arrived in the Duke's wake, preying upon the local people. The court's arrival had brought a temporary prosperity to the villagers, as some rented their houses, others gained employment at the castle, and others sold foodstuffs, so that these two disreputables had a ready market for their wares.

Pans and arrows, bowls, discordant panpipes and animal pelts were on sale from the pedlar, along with stranger gimmicks. Amongst these were a wolf pelt said to have come from a werewolf and guaranteed to protect against wild animals and snakes' poisons; a piece of iron reputed to test a woman's faithfulness to her husband; and other unlikely artifacts.

The potion-seller had equally suspicious wares, including syrups for coughs and salves for fevers, an antidote for snake venom made from a snake-stone (reputedly taken from the brain of a serpent), and slices of mandrake root guaranteed to cure any ill. Now, I will not profess to know anything about mandrakes, but I have heard they are ex-

tremely rare and that pulling one up can kill a man. It seems that if they could cure every conceivable ailment, a slice would be worth a great deal. I also expect that mandrake looks rather less like swede than this did.

A number of other minor servants and hangers-on also stayed in the village, sleeping in barns, on the floor of the inn, and in rooms rented from locals. The bulk of these were animal handlers, carters and the various packers and handlers who dealt with the Duke's luggage, all of whom had time on their hands. Noble retainers and clerics, of course, were quartered in the castle or in the buildings on the edge of town, set aside for the Duke's officers.

A more mysterious visitor to the village was a middle-aged fellow who had a house rented for him by a lord in the Duke's service, but had no evident function. Many lords, of course, keep unnecessary servants simply to make their retinue seem more splendid, but this fellow seemed to be an advisor of some sort. As he was neither a physician nor a priest, I wondered if he might have been a fortune-teller of some sort.

Two women, of little virtue, rented a two-room house in the village, accompanied by a man who claimed to be father of one and husband of the other. Several men developed the reprehensible habit of visiting these two. A healer from a nearby village also came, and stayed with her sister, in order to advise folk on matters of health. And besides these, many others stayed briefly in the village, accompanying minor nobles who came to speak with their duke.

The innkeeper, above all others, profited from the influx, according to the locals doubling his usual prices. He also paid entertainers to perform in his establishment (or at least gave them food and drink), and sent to nearby villages to recruit pretty serving wenches. He cooked a number of his own "banquets" on various pretexts (saints' days, birthdays, anniversaries of supposed historical events), and these were simply oversized servings of his normal fare, with copious drink included for an inflated price.

## Approaching the Baron

After several days I became increasingly shocked by the presence of the two women of easy virtue in the village, and heard stories about their sins, which no monk should have to hear. It seemed that no one in the village or castle was inclined to drive them away. Finally, I came to hear that these women were buying some kind of "love potion" from the potion-seller — and such things are an offense against God and men.

So, one afternoon I lingered in the castle after lunch and waited for Baron von Waldsee to begin his audience. The village was, after all, his estate and he continued to deal justice despite his overlord's presence. When the plates were cleared and tables dismantled or moved to the side, I





was approached by the Baron's steward (his chief servant, a local knight), who asked me whether and why I waited for the Baron.

It transpired that several local men and some servants also sought audience, but the steward asked me if I should like to be heard first, as I was a man of God and they merely peasants. I declined his offer, since the commoners doubtless had more pressing work awaiting them and I was in no hurry.

We waited for half an hour before Baron von Waldsee came into the hall, accompanied by two secretaries and a guard. He sat behind the table on the dais, at the end of the hall, and began to hear his subjects, who explained their grievances in public where all could hear — and the proceedings attracted a handful of spectators from the Duke's entourage.

One man complained that he was being denied access to his house while it was being rented to accommodate the Duke's servants, and the Baron promised to speak with the tenants. Another complained of vandalism committed by certain visiting servants; a servant asked for more candles to light the kitchen; a serf unsuccessfully petitioned the Baron to let his daughters return to the village, as they were spending all their time working in the castle and could not tend the family's sheep. All of these matters were dealt with in great detail and without evident urgency, taking a surprisingly long time.

Eventually, however, the steward asked that I step forward and speak. I came before the table with a slight bow, explained who I was, and tactfully recounted what I had heard of the women, leaving out such details as were best forgotten. The Baron seemed disinterested in the women, but was alarmed to hear of the "love potion," remarking that he would not have his guests or vassals bewitched.

Baron von Waldsee immediately ordered that the potion seller be brought before him, and after I briefly reminded the Baron of the dangers of the sin of lechery, he ordered that the women be brought up as well. The lord talked with his secretaries and servants as we waited for the reprobates to be brought from the village. With distasteful appetites for scandal, many otherwise unemployed courtiers and servants began to gather.

After about half an hour the guards brought in their captives, followed by two score villagers and servants who chattered eagerly. One of the women had been interrupted at her sin, and the guards had simply wrapped her with a blanket and brought her up all but naked, with one of her shoulders shockingly exposed. The other woman had put up something of a struggle, it seemed, but the potion-seller simply stood nervously by.

The trial, such as it was, was rather confused. The potion-seller denied selling love potions, but the Baron still wanted to fine him three pence. However, certain clerics and others objected that this was not a formal court and that



there was no real proof against the man. So the lord simply ordered the scoundrel to leave the town by the following mid-day.

The women were dealt with more harshly. Several onlookers told how their acquaintances or relations had hired the womens' services, and a great deal of unnecessary detail was disclosed to the great glee of the spectators. Their guilt was certain, and the Baron ordered them to be stripped naked, publicly beaten and driven from the village. The women themselves screeched that this was not a court, but no one felt inclined to heed them.

## The Tournament

Several days after the Duke's arrival, a "tournament" of sorts was held. This was simply an excuse for the fighting men of the area to demonstrate their skill at arms. It soon turned into a fair in itself, with pedlars and other folk traveling in to take advantage of the crowds who flocked to watch, the local innkeeper raising his prices further still and the Baron's servants struggling to accommodate the visiting nobles.

A large flat field had been chosen in the shadow of the castle, and a wooden stand erected for the Duke and other dignitaries. The stand was equipped with chairs and a cloth canopy. The common folk simply sat or stood on the ground to watch the spectacle.

The Duke had announced the tournament before even arriving at the castle — though the Baron had doubtless been asked whether it might be staged on his land — and news had spread rapidly, even attracting three French knights.

The terms of the tournament had been set out well in advance, and were designed to encourage local knights and discourage greedy foreign adventurers. In some tournaments a knight, forced to yield or subdued, becomes the victor's property. The victim must relinquish his arms, armor and horse, and sometimes even pay a ransom to the knight or knights who captured him. But here there was no ransom or loot to be taken, and the knights fought only for the sake of it, and for the prizes offered by the Duke.

A destrier (war horse) worth the value of fifty normal horses was to be given to the "Champion" (the man who, in the Duke's eyes, fought with the greatest skill and courage). Besides this prize, knights hoped that other gifts would be forthcoming if they impressed the Duke. Many hoped that by fighting well they would earn places in the Duke's retinue, or at least be considered more valuable allies.

No doubt the Duke wished to raise the morale and review the prowess of his subjects, rather than have them impoverished or wounded by foreigners. The Duke himself did not participate in the melee, but watched attentively. The peasantry also watched eagerly, some hoping to see their lords victorious, others delighting in their masters' humiliations, but all overawed by the terrifying spectacle of

fifty armored knights careering about a field attacking one another. I wonder how, after watching such a clear demonstration of noble might, any peasant could seriously consider rebelling.

Several groups of knights congregated at different parts of the field — some courtiers of the Duke, one group of locals led by the baron himself, some neighboring knights and barons, and a few traveling nobles who roamed from tournament to tournament in search of fame and money.

Having presented themselves individually to the Duke, they took up places around the area, awaiting his signal to start. A wave of his hand and a blast of a horn sent several groups cantering into the center of the field, where they briefly circled and viewed each other before selecting opponents and charging. Two forces crashed together with a clashing of metal and a roar from the crowd, and two knights were unseated. A third force then joined in the fracas, and a chaotic scramble ensued.

After some minutes the three sides broke away to regroup, unhorsed knights remounting — if they could — and a gaggle of servants rushed to the aid of one fallen combatant who seemed unable to rise. One of the groups who had thus far remained on the edge of the field now cantered forward and pursued some of those knights who had not yet rejoined their comrades, and as their friends came to their aid another scrap ensued.

This chaotic scramble continued throughout the morning and well into the afternoon, often ranging beyond the designated area and across fields and into orchards, until day's light began to fade. Sometimes two groups agreed to fight one another, but more often frays developed spontaneously, as one group decided to attack an apparently vulnerable set of opponents, or simply fell upon whichever foes were closest. The melee was at times frantic — with all the knights hacking at each other simultaneously — and was at times very subdued, as all the groups paused to tend their wounds or discuss strategies. In such pauses individual duels were sometimes fought.

Almost every participating knight sustained some wound, and seven or eight were so badly injured that they had to be carried from the field. No one was more in demand that day than the Duke's barber-surgeon, and several lords had the foresight (and wealth) to bring their own healers with them. Remarkably there were no deaths.

The weapons were all blunt, of course, and weapons which rely on weight rather than keen edges — such as axes and morning stars — were banned. Yet the nobles were relieved and surprised that there had been no fatalities, and all involved fought well — as far as my untutored eye could discern. The only blemish upon any knight's reputation resulted from the accidental killing of a horse by a poorly aimed sword-blow. The offending knight was disqualified from the tournament and ordered to replace the animal he killed.



While the melee continued, a number of other events occurred amongst the peasantry. There were wrestlers challenging all comers to a bout (the challenger paying a farthing, and standing to win half the money in the kitty). Two enterprising guards issued similar challenges to quarterstaff duels. Hawkers and pedlars touted their wares. And an archery competition was very well attended. Various drunken fights inevitably broke out and were brutally suppressed by the guards, and a thief stole a purse of money and was tackled in the resulting hue and cry, being hung the next day for his crime.

Tournaments of this sort have been roundly criticized by the Church. If hostages are taken and spoils kept this is said to be theft; equally condemned are the fighters who roam beyond the designated site and trample crops; those who slay opponents are guilty of the sin of murder. Indeed, many churchmen refuse to grant Christian burial to those killed in tournaments.

## Crossing the Alps

At length, Brother Mathias was ready to leave the court. We departed early one morning, heading for the closest pass across the Alps.

Reaching the beginning of our pass in three days, we inquired with the local villagers how we might secure transport and guides across the mountains. Suitable fellows were easily found, as many locals made their livings from ferrying such travelers as us.

We found several other travelers in a local inn (actually the only local inn), and decided to cross with them. We were partly glad for the company, but also felt there would be safety in greater numbers. Not only were there natural dangers of landslide, avalanche and treacherous paths, but there may have been bandits along the way, and we felt unsettled by our dour, humorless guides.

The journey began the next morning, when we were sat in small iron-shod ox-carts, each with two wheels and very little room. Two people could sit in each, if they had little baggage and did not mind being cramped, but our guides advised us to sit one to each, so that we might stay securely in the center of the cart and not risk falling out. Since we paid a price based upon the number of carts we hired, I suspected that they said this to get more money from us, but as the journey progressed I began to realize that their advice had been sound.

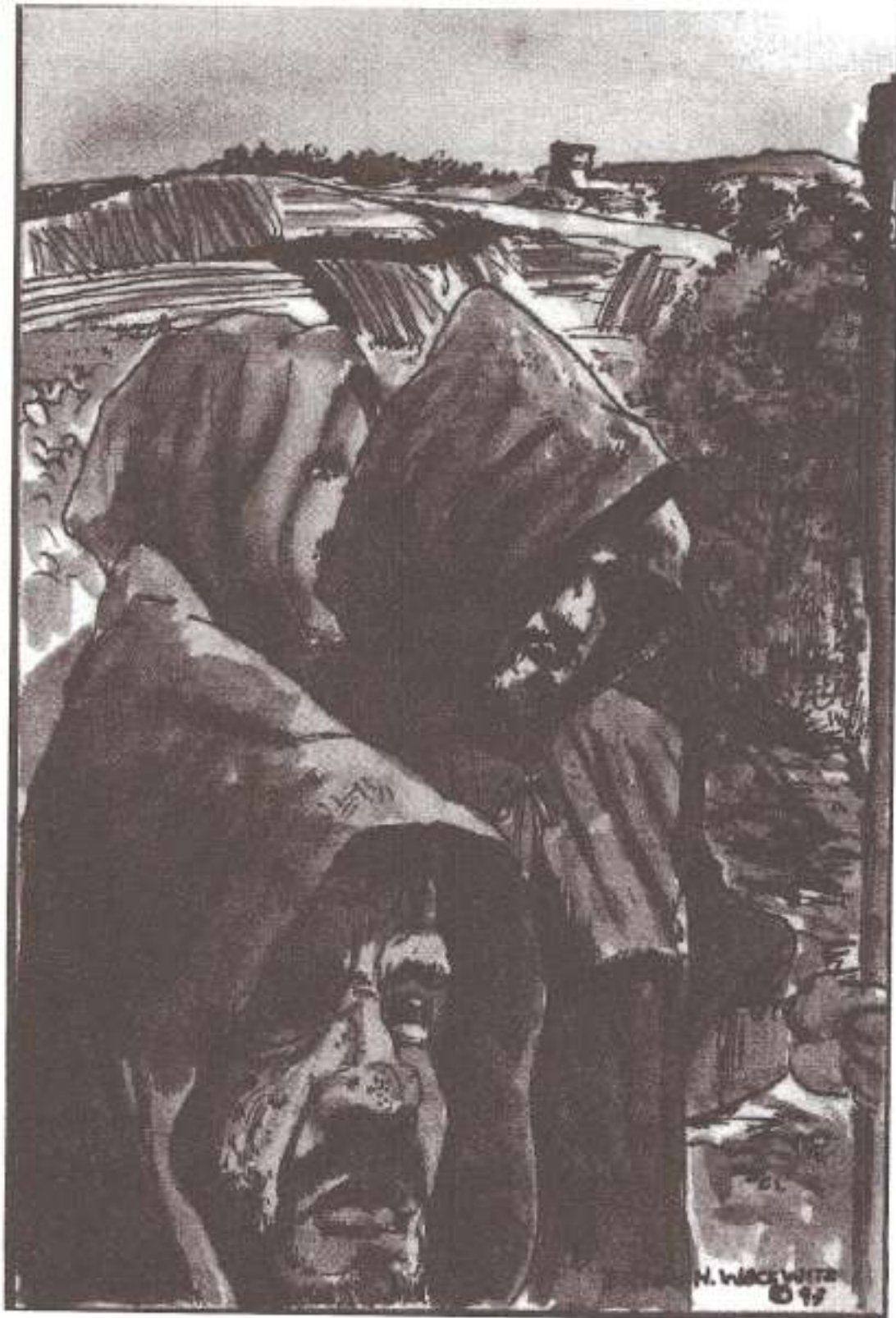
The ox pulling each cart walked ten paces in front of its burden, attached by a long rope. A burly guide walked at the front of each wagon, a heavy knife at his belt. His main function was to push and pull the cart to help it around corners and over bumps, and on the tightest corners and most uneven stretches the guides would combine their efforts to shift one cart at a time, so that we sometimes covered no more than one hundred paces in one hour.

The guide's other function was to cut loose the ox if it should slip from the path into the ravines which we skirted. This was the reason that the beasts were attached with such long ropes, so that their deaths need not also doom the passengers in the carts.

Passengers who had horses tied the beasts behind their carts, or else hired additional guides to lead the animals. I myself had brought few belongings and had a cart to myself, but sat shivering beneath a blanket, my hands and feet quite numb. I prayed earnestly that Saint Christopher might keep me safe through the journey.

Although it was late summer there remained patches of snow in places, which the guides approached cautiously. The snows were now at the height of their thaw, and the water running from each patch might have washed away part of the path beneath them or might have rendered the snow slippery. The waters rushing from the mountains into the ravines swelled the streams beneath us, and sometimes caused small cascades to bisect the muddy paths.

The guides trudged on regardless of the icy water, clinging mud and damp snows, and were never heard to complain — although several of the passengers groaned and cursed. One young merchant was so terrified by the sight of the ravines beneath us and the slippery paths that he became almost hysterical. The guides had to blindfold him in an attempt to keep him calm.





Every night we stopped at some small village or dismal set of shacks, and there had hot food. I was also careful to rub onion juice over my frozen feet, as this is known to avert and cure chilblains. Several others did the same. We slept closely together those nights, sometimes four to each bed, in order to stay warm. We drifted to sleep listening to one another's teeth chattering.

Every morning we rose and had a hot breakfast: a bowl of steaming porridge and a mug of warm ale. I am unaccustomed to eating more than a piece of bread for breakfast, but found this an excellent preparation for the day's journey.

In this manner we crossed the Alps, paid off our guides, and continued on our journey into the warm valleys.

## Arriving at the Abbey

We eventually arrived at the Abbey di Trento late one afternoon, finding it to be a compact, fortified structure perched high in the foothills of the Alps, with wooden out-buildings and animal pens spilling down the hillside.

We climbed up to the main gate, which stood welcomingly open, and were greeted by three lay-brothers, who brought us a jug of water to wash our hands. We gave our blessing, and they parted for us to enter.

The gates opened into the main compound or courtyard, a muddy enclosure perhaps fifty paces across. It was flanked on the left by pig and goat pens and the wooden huts where lay brothers slaughtered animals, tanned hides and made parchment. On our right were vegetable gardens, beyond which a doorway led into a smaller garden, where herbs were tended for the kitchen and the infirmary, and there access could be gained to the cloister.

Facing the gates across the courtyard was the great church, which stood some seventy paces in length and perhaps forty paces high. Recently enlarged and still being completed, part of the church was covered with wooden poles and boards, lashed together to make platforms for the workmen who labored carving at the stone. A dozen stone-masons from the cities chipped away, creating crucifixes, angelic faces and other such devices in raised relief.

## The Formalities

Brother Mathias led me to the abbot's chambers. First asking a lay brother to announce us, we presented ourselves to His Grace, and he greeted us cordially, embracing Brother Mathias warmly and me somewhat more formally.

It is a strange feeling for a lowly monk to be greeted on such equal terms by such a great man. An embrace signifies some recognition of rank, almost of equality, whereas a lowly person should normally kneel or at least bow before a superior, and kiss his ring if he is an abbot or bishop.

Nonetheless, as ambassador from my own abbot, I had temporarily and perhaps undeservingly been granted a certain degree of importance.

The abbot inquired politely about my journey, and received the letter and small parcel of books which I carried. After reading the letter, he inspected the books, saw that two were exemplars from this abbey, and leafed through the books which we were giving him in return. He granted me leave to inspect their library — which was of such great size that it merited a whole room to itself — and asked me to select one or two books for my abbey, without restriction, of which exemplars would be prepared.

Clearly wishing to speak further with Brother Mathias, in private, the abbot called in a lay brother, whom he instructed to find me a cell, and His Grace bade me leave with his blessing.

## Settling In

I was shown to a small room with a comfortable straw mattress bed, and given directions to the various key rooms of the monastery — the chapter house, library and dining room — which were in any case all attached to the cloister and easy enough to find.

The daily acts of worship were timed according to a sundial outside the church, and in the night or during cloudy days the monks resorted to the use of a water-clock which stood in the cloister. Each service was announced by the tolling of the church's bells, however, as is customary, so that it was unnecessary for every brother to take notice of these clocks.

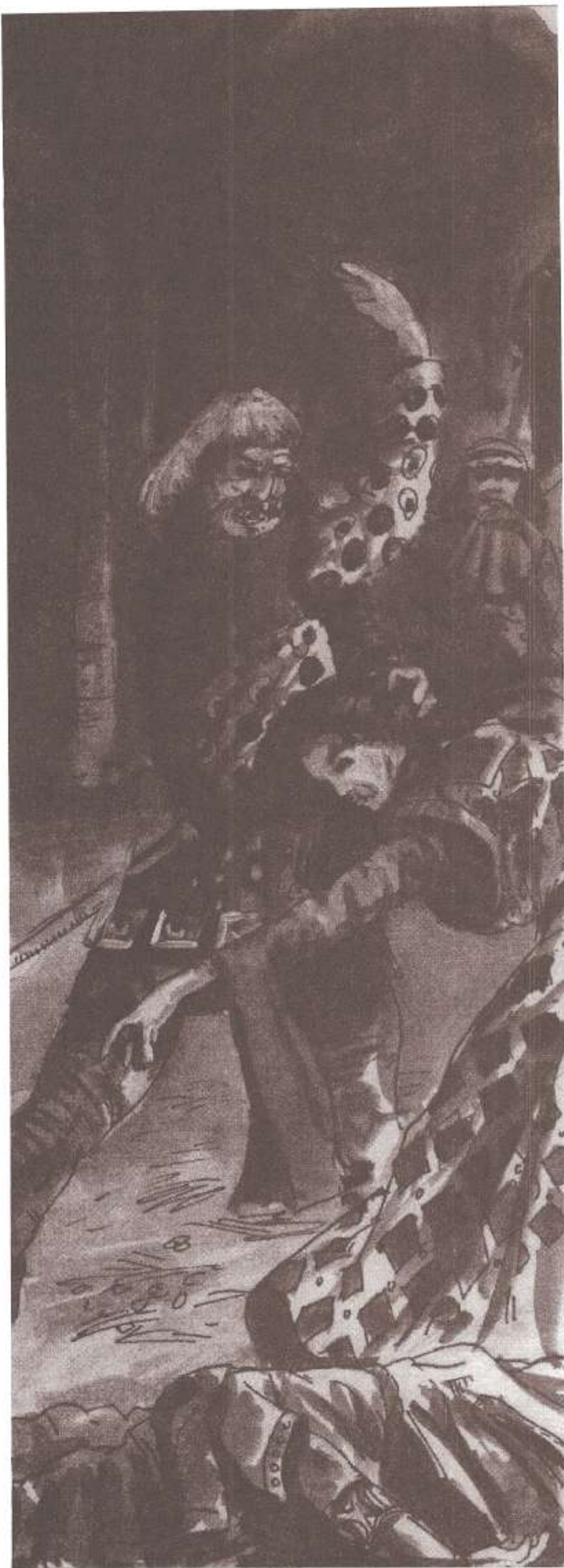
The evening meal was served half an hour before Compline, and before this meal every monk was expected to wash his hands in the trough by the cloister. I was warned that since many lay-brothers performed dirty manual tasks, with the animals or in the fields, it was advisable to wash a little early, before they streamed in from their work.

After being shown to my chamber, I immediately went to the church, where I gave thanks for my safe arrival, praying particularly to Saint Christopher (patron of travel) and the Blessed Virgin Mary. The numbness in my limbs was now subsiding, but a sharp ache remained in my feet, so I prayed also to Saint Michael and Saint James for relief.

As I completed my devotions I was approached by the brother Hospitaller — responsible for housing guests and pilgrims. He bade me welcome and asked whether the accommodation was acceptable. I confirmed that I needed nothing more, and apologized for not having sought him out and introduced myself. He replied that as the abbot's guest, and having already seen His Grace, there was no need to then present myself to him.

His purpose in seeking me, he explained, was to ask whether I wished to be woken for worship at Matins and Lauds. Doubtless he expected me to seek rest after the journey, but I replied that I wished only to live according to





the Rule and would certainly attend the divine offices. However, mindful of my human frailty I asked that a novice or lay-brother be sent to wake me in case I slept through the bells.

That evening I had no wish to examine the library or explore the abbey, but immersed myself in monastic life. At dinner I revelled in the silence at the table — which seemed quite remarkable after the bellicose cacophony at the Duke's court — and listened attentively as a young brother read aloud the stories of the lives of Saint Mennas and Saint Phocas the Gardener.

The service of Compline was quite an uplifting experience, and I retired happily to bed immediately afterward, as is proper. As I drifted into sleep I reflected that at the Duke's court it would yet be four hours before they even sat down to eat, and they would not be asleep before we had finished Matins.

My concern that I might oversleep proved unfounded, as the midnight bells woke me for Matins, and I was tying my belt as a young novice opened the door to see that I was awake.

I must, however, have been more tired than I thought, for in the hour between Matins and Lauds I fell asleep in the choir stalls. I then dozed off again during Lauds, and was shaken awake by a novice who was charged with looking out for such things.

After Lauds I was relieved to return to bed for a further three hours' sleep, and rose much refreshed when the bells sounded for Prime, half an hour before dawn.

## An Aside on Continuity

It is a great comfort for a monk to know that wherever he may go in all Christendom he will find monasteries where the same schedule and regime are followed. The monks — at least their leaders — will speak Latin; the services are held at the same times; and the same official positions are awarded to the most responsible brothers.

Almost all orders of monks — the Benedictines, Cistercians and many others — observe the Rule of Saint Benedict, which obliges us to be obedient to God and our superiors, hard-working and humble. Even Augustinian canons, although they disregard the Rule and follow the teachings of Saint Augustine, strive to live in obedience, piety, diligence and humility.

Matins, Lauds and Prime are celebrated everywhere during the night, the first commencing at midnight and the last timed to end at dawn. And throughout the day, five further offices are sung (Terce, Sext, Nones, Vespers and Compline), at roughly two- to three-hour intervals, the last ending at dusk.



Similarly, the same ranks are universally bestowed upon monks. The abbot rules each abbey; a prior acts as his assistant or runs a priory (a smaller monastery, sometimes a "daughter house" of an abbey); the sacristan is responsible for the church, the vestments and ritual items, and the upkeep of the buildings; the cellarer buys and sells with the outside world, regulating the kitchens, stables, barns and otherwise oversees the running of the abbey; the precentor leads the monks in song and often oversees the library; the master of the novices disciplines and oversees the education of young would-be monks; the infirmarer looks after those who are ill and maintains the health of the others (often bleeding the entire community, and sometimes prescribing cautery, amended diets and laxatives); and the Hospitaller sees to the accommodation of the pilgrims, nobles and other travelers who may seek temporary accommodation.

A great deal of variation, however, exists within this framework. Masses may be conducted in addition to the eight divine offices: Sometimes a Mass is sung between Prime and Terce; sometimes the latter is extended to include a Mass (usually lasting one to two hours); others may be sung throughout the day for the souls of patrons or any other reason.

Similarly, many additional positions may be awarded to wise and responsible brothers. The cellarer may have assistants to oversee the work of the lay-brothers, and his duties of distributing money to the poor may be given to an almoner. Likewise, the precentor's custody of the books may be given to a librarian. An herbalist may tend herbs for use in the kitchen and infirmary. If the monastery often educates the sons of secular lords, special tutors may be assigned to these children, and the master of the novices may lose some of his responsibilities.

## Giuseppe the Infirmarer

The following morning my feet remained extremely tender, and when I walked it seemed that searing needles pressed into the soles. And so, as soon as Prime had been celebrated, I sought out the abbey's infirmary.

This was a low building, attached to the cloister with its own small chapel — so that those brothers who were too sick to attend the church might at least celebrate Mass once per day — and its own kitchen. Here two neat rows of beds filed down the sides of the room, and the infirmarer — who had been absent at Prime — stooped over a patient amidst a cluster of other brothers and novices. Intrigued to see what lured so many monks away from their work and contemplations, I joined the gaggle and stretched to see over their shoulders.

On the bed there lay a weather-worn youth, perhaps fifteen years old and too haggard to have been a monk. His trousers had been cut off at the knees, and it seemed that his

legs were unnaturally swollen, one at the ankle and one at the shin. Looking closer I realized that the shin was not only bloated but was actually slightly buckled.

The infirmarer laid out rolls of linen bandages and two straight wooden splints. A novice, who seemed to be his assistant, beat a sickly brown paste in a bowl. The infirmarer was intent upon explaining his procedure to the novice. As he spoke softly, the rest of us remained silent in order to hear what he said.

The patient, who was clearly in considerable pain and rather nervous, was given a padded chunk of wood to clench between his teeth — which did not seem to improve his spirits. The infirmarer then explained that he would first have to set the bone, and asked two well-built brothers to hold the patient's leg. He then leant down to touch the misshapen shin, and the peasant went quite pale. As the infirmarer began to press, prod and pull at the leg, the unfortunate patient — or perhaps victim — struggled slightly, whimpered and lost consciousness.

After several minutes of manipulation the leg made a sharp clicking noise and seemed to straighten. The infirmarer then pasted his mixture around the limb, explaining that it would slowly dry to form a hard if brittle shell, to help the leg set. Pressing the splints to the sides of the shin, he carefully began to bandage the leg, all the way from the foot to the thigh, so that the peasant could not move it when he awoke.

The spectators murmured approvingly, and praised God and the infirmarer's skill. The healer stood, smiled coldly, and noted that he had other less interesting work to do and needed the infirmary uncluttered. As the others left I stood to one side, and then approached him, explaining that my feet troubled me and asked if he might have time to inspect them later in the day.

With a shrug he said he may as well look at them immediately, and led me into an adjoining room filled with pots and bunches of herbs, introducing himself as Brother Giuseppe.

The room was dark and had a heady smell to it, and I noted that a bed sat in one corner. I asked if the brother did not sleep in the dormitory with the other monks, and he noted that his work often required concoctions to brew overnight, so that he had to stay to oversee these processes. He also remarked, more somberly, that an herbalist's is a dangerous place, and should not be left unattended.

As he mixed some powdered herbs into a syrup, I wondered what he meant by this last remark, but found myself reflecting more upon his name. I have often noted that while more women are named Mary than anything else, men are most seldom named after the head of the Holy Family, and I do not understand why Joseph (or Giuseppe, or any of the other variants) is so rare a name. I wondered if he had brought the name with him to the monastery, or if it had been given to him once he had arrived, for either way it was unusual.



The novice was dispatched to the infirmary again, clutching a bowl of oily liquid which he was directed to rub into the joints of an elderly and achy brother. The infirmarer now sat me down and removed my shoes, prodding roughly at sore points. I recoiled sharply, and Brother Giuseppe told me I had developed a nasty set of chilblains.

I protested that I had rubbed onion juice onto my feet every night across the Alps, but the brother noted that that was not an infallible prevention. He also suggested, somewhat blithely, that my chills might alternatively have been caused by bewitchment. The idea seemed unlikely but I crossed myself instinctively.

Brother Giuseppe prepared a balm to rub onto my feet, and as he worked I asked who his patient in the infirmary had been. He said the lad was a goat-herd, who had slipped on an icy ledge and crashed to the rocks twenty feet below. I noted that it was very good of him to spend time on a peasant, but he shrugged and said the lad was one of the abbey's serfs and the abbot had ordered him treated. Otherwise, he would not have taken such trouble. Impressed by the complexity of the cure, I asked if the leg would mend. The brother muttered that with God's grace the boy might learn to hobble a little. I also tried to find out how the setting paste had been made, but the infirmarer refused to tell me, saying only that the main ingredient was a little-known herb.

After rubbing his tonic onto my feet, the infirmarer took a book and two scraps of parchment, and copied some words onto each scrap. He handed them to me and told me to wear one in each shoe, touching the soles. I examined the writing and found it to be a somewhat unusual prayer, invoking Saint Stephen and certain angels. I asked if this was approved of by the abbot, and the infirmarer said it came from a text which contained many charms, invocations and snippets of herbal lore, and that the previous abbot had closely examined each. After some deliberation only two or three of the charms had been condemned, as they named unfamiliar "angels" which may have been demons.

## A Story of Necromancy

It transpired that in the previous abbot's time there had been a great scare through the abbey, during which several brothers were cast out of the monastery and excommunicated for dabbling in magic. Intrigued and anxious, I asked Giuseppe to elaborate, and he told me the following tale.

Thirty years before, a young monk had lived at the abbey, and had such a passion for books that he was appointed to collect and seek out new additions to the library. This he did with great vigor, but with dubious piety, and certain books which good Christians should not read he had copied for his own use.

However, the monk had no money — having forsaken property as we all do on entering the order — and so turned to two other brothers, who had wealthy relations. Simply, the monk had his accomplices borrow money from their families, bought the books, copied them himself using the abbey's materials, and sold the texts again to repay the loan. In return for the money, these other brothers had access to the books, and one of them decided to try out one of the methods suggested for discerning the future.

According to Brother Giuseppe — who must himself have been a novice at the time — the misguided brother took two young novices, and after invoking certain unknown "angels" and drawing a circle around the boys, painted some glistening chrism onto their fingernails. Apparently the "spirits of the dead" were supposed to appear in these reflective surfaces to answer questions. But as we all know, the dead cannot be called back, and such spirits are invariably demons.

One of the novices claimed that he could see misty figures in his nails and that one seemed to be riding a horse. The novice was instructed to tell the spirit to dismount and remove its crown, place one hand on its head and swear to tell the truth. Evidently the spirit did not wish to take this oath, for instead of complying it vanished.

The whole matter was revealed by the other novice, who did not have the talent for such necromancy, and in his jealousy reported the matter to the master of novices, who reported it to the abbot. It was found that in ten years the blaspheming monks had acquired four books, including the infamous *Death of the Soul*, which they had purchased from a lector in a nearby town.

I did not know what to make of the story — whether it was embroidered with the gossip of young novices and exaggerated over the years, or whether it was true. I would not be qualified to judge such matters. But following the revelation the abbot supposedly had all the monastery's books inspected, including the unusual volume in the infirmary.

In many ways, however, the infirmarer's tale had an air of truth about it, although I doubt it was completely accurate. The junior members of the clergy (who are literate but not ordained priests, sometimes scholars and often part-time servants of the Church) are often tempted to dabble in sorcery. I have heard other tales of priests, friars, monks and even a bishop being drawn into their blasphemies.

## Confession

Following my visit to the infirmary, I felt the need to make my confession. At Terce the Mass would be celebrated, and I did not wish to abstain from the sacrament as I would have done if I were burdened by unconfessed sins. The theologians say, of course, that it is only mortal sins which bar a man from receiving the sacrament (and then



bicker about which sins are mortal and which are venial), but I would rather eat at the Lords Table only when in a state of grace.

I thus sought out the brother Hospitaller, and asked if he would hear me, or else suggest someone who would. Having no urgent tasks he agreed, and we went to my cell. There I told him of my impiety (my dozing during the divine office), and also confessed the other sins which I had accumulated while crossing the Alps — anger at our guides, and lapses of faith when I doubted that God would lead us safely through.

Having listed my wrongs I felt them almost physically lifted from me, as a weight taken from my shoulders. The brother absolved me of my sins and proscribed a lenient penance, suggesting only that I should spend an hour in prayer after Terce — which is the time when resident monks gather in the chapter house to discuss the day's business and hear a chapter from the Rule.

## The Library

The library did not contain every book in the monastery, but certainly the vast bulk rested here, numbering perhaps three hundred volumes in total — which was an extremely enviable collection. The infirmarer had one additional book, the abbot had several in his own possession, a Psalter and book of readings remained in the church, and the cellarer kept written accounts. Moreover, two Bibles and a Psalter were stored in the crypt beneath the church, with the relics, as their bindings included the bones of saints.

Most of the library's books were kept on shelves around the room, lying with their spines flat to the shelf, leather or embroidered sleeves protecting them from accidental damage. Only the most beautiful, valuable or rare were locked away in chests in the usual manner. Three larger tomes — which measured more than an arm's length in height — were laid flat on tables.

I examined a great number on texts that day, and while some were inexpertly illuminated, the pages of most sparkled with gold leaf and fine pictures. Even the covers were beautifully adorned, most being of finely tooled leather, others having elaborate metal bosses or embroidered bindings, and some even had decorated clasps and sleeves. Only the most common or shoddy manuscripts remained unbound or in plain wooden covers, while the great works of holy men, and particularly the Bibles, were decorated in a splendor suitable to their content.

The library's holy books included many hagiographies, detailing the lives of the holy saints, and the writings of such authorities as Saint Augustine, Bernard and Anselm. There were books against the Arian heresy and against Manichaeism, texts enumerating the faults of the Waldensians and Cathars, sentences (collections of aphorisms), volumes expounding upon the law of the Church (Canon law), and others asserting or condemning the Pope's claim to temporal overlordship.



Besides these holy works there were also books concerning science, particularly medicine. Translations of Arabic and ancient Greek were to be found amongst them, including a huge medical encyclopedia translated from the Moors. Also there were books on maintaining health and curing ills, as well as writings concerned with astrology, arithmetic and geometry.

I also found bestiaries explaining the wondrous denizens of God's creation, including such marvels as the Ethiopian bird which grows as a flower and forms from the bloom, or the Egyptian Crocodilus, which has skin tougher than iron and excrement which restores the oldest woman's youthful beauty. A lapidary stood on the same shelf, detailing the equally amazing properties of stones and minerals. I also found a book explaining the abbey's past, numerous mortuary rolls, histories and tracts concerning the Crusades, collections of papal proclamations, a book of local legends, a work recounting stories of witchcraft, and collections of religious and chivalrous poems.

Leafing through the books presented difficulties, however, as the small room had neither desks, tables nor reading stands. The resident monks worked at desks in the cloister, and although one was found for me its distance made browsing difficult.

Ideally I would have loved to have made a copy of one of the bestiaries, but much of their wonder lay in the beautiful (if fanciful) pictures, which would not be reproduced in an Exemplar. And so I picked out one of the



hagiographies which dealt with Greek and eastern saints, of whom I had never heard before, and for the second book I chose a work concerning Canon law.

## Abuse and Corruption

I do not list these crimes to accuse or slander anyone, and I will not name those alleged to be guilty of the crimes I enumerate. Rather, I wish only to remind the reader that sin may be found even in these holy enclaves of Christian life, and to emphasize several ills which all too often fester in a monastery. While a house of prayer and contemplation is a wondrous place, visitors should beware of naively falling into sin.

There are certain rumors which are whispered in every monastery, almost without exception. Any brother who is too often found in the local villages is said to be guilty of drunkenness, gaming or lechery; most cellarers are said to be misappropriating funds; at least one monk is said to have taken a wife; the master of the novices is often supposed to indulge in or condone the sin of sodomy. All of these rumors are as often as not untrue. Nonetheless, there were certain sins at this abbey in which a minority of the brothers did indulge, much to the shame of this essentially laudable house.

For example, there was a certain brother who had in earlier times been sent to a convent as a chaplain, so that he could hear confession and perform Mass for the nuns. However, he had suddenly been recalled after two of the sisters had inexplicably become pregnant. Still, he was more fortunate than they, for they had been expelled from their convent and excommunicated for violating their vows of celibacy. He had merely been recalled.

The master of novices was a blameless man, but perhaps too lax. As in many monasteries, those boys found intimately embracing each other were merely whipped, with no other punishment or penance, and certain monks had been treated lightly when caught in a state of sin with one another or with the novices. Young monks are too often tempted to this hideous sin, of course, but punishment and penance must be applied to prevent further transgressions.

Several monks with wealthy families, who had the favor of the abbey, were sometimes seen to go hunting with their families, often garbed as secular nobles and with saddles and harnesses bedecked with bells and precious metals. Sometimes they would be absent for days on end, and when present sometimes overslept or abstained from holy office on a whim, which set a bad example for other monks.

The sacristan, too, was of high breeding, and disliked the coarse wool of which monks' robes are made. Between the times of worship he would often be seen in fine wools or linens, and had a soft robe beneath his habit at all times.

Further, the cellarer had an assistant, responsible for overseeing the lay brothers who cooked and made candles in the kitchens, who was rumored to be earning himself money by stealing freshly made candles and selling them in the village.

I pray to God that these people may see the errors of their ways, repent and truly confess their sins. And I pray also that the tales I heard were exaggerations.

## Sojourn and Return

I remained in the Abbey di Trento for about one month, revelling in the pious routine of monastic life. In between hearing the divine offices, I busied myself copying one of the books to make an exemplar. The other text was copied by a resident at di Trento, and when these were both complete I was free to return.

I took my leave from the abbot, praised his abbey and thanked him for his hospitality, kissed his ring and received his tentative embrace. I then bade farewell to the brothers who had befriended me during my stay, and struck off northward again, clutching two fresh exemplars and a letter to my own abbot.

The first autumn snows had begun to fall powdery over the Alps, and the firmer ground made the crossing less frightening and slightly swifter.

I broke my journey at the Baron von Waldsee's castle — now being very much quieter and slowly recovering after the Duke's hectic stay — and then returned home to our own abbey.



The abbot's carriage lurched through the castle gates and came to rest in the long shadow of the high walls. Two darkly-clad lay brethren dismounted from the front and hurried around to open the door for their lord, whose considerable frame emerged slowly and with some trembling.

Five horses, which had followed the chariot at a small distance, moved into the courtyard with more dignity, and their riders dismounted with some trepidation. One, a lay brother, went with the grooms who came to take the beasts. The two guards remained respectfully in the background. The white-clad monks moved nervously toward their lord.

The abbot stood for a second, recovering his composure. From the main hall, a tall nobleman emerged, clad in a burgundy tunic and carrying an ornate sword at his side. He hurried across to his guest, bowing slightly.

"I trust that the journey was not. . . err. . ."

"The journey was vile. The roads are vile. Chariots are vile." The abbot scowled at the knight for a moment, and then broke into a silent chuckle. "Come here and embrace me, Richard — I'm still your uncle, after all!"

The knight stepped forward and the two clutched each others' shoulders, kissing one and other on both cheeks.

"Now," the abbot continued, "our mutual friend has arrived?"

"He and his men arrived an hour ago," the knight remarked with distaste as the two turned and walked toward the buildings. "He's already drunk. He demanded serving girls to dance with, and in all hospitality I couldn't refuse. He's got them as drunk as his men. They're all in the hall, dancing peasant dances to their discordant pipes."

"Quite. I thank you for the guards you sent to accompany me, although they were unnecessary of course. You know, you are becoming pleasantly snobbish about music — I remember when you came to my abbey and loved those peasant tunes. I am glad you learned something with us."



The two filed through a short corridor and mounted a narrow staircase. In the chamber at the top, a pitcher of wine stood on a table and a broad bed took up one third of the room.

"It's the peasants I loathe, to be honest, and their music only because it's theirs. I can't even get enough servants at the moment, and it's impossible to make them fix the roads. Am I too proud?"

"Undoubtedly, though I'm sure God will forgive you," the abbot joked. "But you have to learn that at harvest time the servants want to get back to their farms. Really, it's foolish to complain, as their harvest is ours — yours in taxes and the Church's in tithes."

"I'm sorry about the state of the road, though. I hardly notice it from horseback. Your illness is no better?"

"I can't ride and can't kneel, but it gets no worse. The room is excellent as ever," the abbot paused to take a sip of wine, "and this is very fine indeed!"

The knight smiled wryly. "It's one of yours. My steward bought twenty-four gallons from your cellarer."

"Well! I shall enjoy the fruits of my labor before I take a rest. My brothers will be found places?"

"In the room at the foot of the stairs, my lord Abbot," the knight bowed slightly and smiled. "We might as well eat at dusk, if that is acceptable?"

"Just the three of us I trust? Go with God, Richard."

Sir Richard ensured that the monks would be served with anything they required, and also made certain that the Basques in the hall were discretely but securely guarded. Then he retired to the battlements, far from the piercing trills of the revellers' pipes, and sat looking out toward the Pyrenees.

He had been born further north, second son of a wealthy baron near Bordeaux, and had worked hard to secure command of this castle. His father had given him every opportunity, first arranging that he be sent away to be tutored at the abbey where his uncle was abbot, but also ensuring that his boy learned to fight, having him knighted at some expense. The gowns for the ceremony had cost several pounds, quite apart from the expense of traveling to England.



It was then that he had decided to accompany the King on Crusade to the east, despite his father's protestations. Although he fought without distinction, Richard's reliability and education earned him a place in the King's court, overseeing part of the vast stables. This, coupled with his uncle's and father's influence, had eventually persuaded the King that he deserved some better posting. And now he was castellan of this garrison, guarding one of the passes south from Gascony.

The castle was comfortable and its command easy enough, though the pass across the mountains was occasionally made impassable by well-organized bandits who demanded tolls from merchants and had even waylaid two wealthy pilgrims. Best situated to prevent the attacks was the Basque, "Baron" di Erro, who had made a fortune as a mercenary commander, had seized a border town by treachery, and was likely behind the banditry himself. And now, on the abbot's suggestion, Sir Richard was to dine with this butcher, in order to discuss the problem of banditry. The irony of it did not amuse him.

Before the meal the abbot had a bath prepared, assigning his favored companion, Brother Mark, to oversee its preparation.

The young monk had been a little surprised to hear that his lord wished to bathe, respectfully warning of the health hazards caused by too frequent immersion, and questioned whether Sir Richard and the Basque were of sufficient importance for the abbot to make such preparations. Nonetheless, His Grace would not be dissuaded, and Brother Mark soon found himself quite occupied with the difficulties of organizing the bath.

The tub was located in a small out-building, which was a bare, drab room, wooden walls lightened by a thin, pale paint. The water had to be carried from the kitchen in small buckets, so that the bath was somewhat tepid. Moreover, the servants could provide none of the herbs with which the abbot's bath was usually scented.

Nonetheless, the brother did what he could. He had several sponges laid on the seat in the tub, with a sheet over them, forming a cushioned chair at the level of the water. He placed another large sponge on the base of the tub, so that his lord's feet might rest there without being pierced by splinters, and had a soft sponge and a hot bowl of water close by, scented with whatever the servants could provide. With another sheet laid out on the floor by the tub, and two more at hand to dry the abbot, His Grace was informed that the bath was ready.

The abbot was unimpressed by the room, winced slightly as he stepped into the tub, and sat in sombre meditation as Brother Mark poured buckets of water over him and rubbed him clean with the soft sponge.



"Brother Mark," the abbot asked as the monk rubbed at his shoulders, "was I too informal with my nephew?"

"My lord?"

"I embraced him, almost as an equal."

"He is your nephew, as you said," Brother Mark hedged. "It was merely a sign of familial affection, as I saw it. And no one of importance watched."

The abbot remained silent as his bath was completed, wishing that there were a fire in the room and that the water were warmer. He stood and stepped onto the sheet which lay on the floor, waiting while Brother Mark put another sheet around him and rubbed him dry.

After his bath the abbot donned a clean habit, and had one of the lay-brothers — his barber — sharpen a knife and freshly shave his face and tonsure. He felt quite refreshed after the hellish journey, and was reassured that his crisp, clean appearance would be firmly at odds with the filthy, bearded visage of di Erro.

Di Erro pushed the jug away, coughed loudly and spat the phlegm into the corner of the room. He then wiped his hands on the tablecloth and stood. "You'll think over my offer, of course. I'll leave in the morning."

The servants moved forward as he left the table, removing the guest's trencher and unused goblet, and scraping some of the solids from the table, they turned to go.

"Take the wine jug, if you will," their master snapped at them, "and bring us another that he hasn't dribbled into." The servants withdrew silently, and the knight turned to his other guest. "Is this really the man you expect me to ally myself with, my lord Abbot?"

"He holds an important town on the road to Santiago. He could safeguard the pilgrims better than any other."

"He's a bloody butcher, and it's his men that attack the pilgrims. I hate the Basques — especially their mercenary lords."

The abbot shrugged. "You've allied yourself with butchers before. Indeed, your own brother. . ."

"Yes I know, I know. But at least they didn't drink from the wine jug and spit on the floor. They didn't pick their noses at the table, my lord, or mop the sauce from the serving dishes with their bread. And even my brother was more courteous than that savage."



"He was drunk, Richard. You are letting your sensibilities interfere with your reason, perhaps?"

The servants returned with fresh towels, and more wine, but their master waved the jug away. "There is no such distinction. Imagine if the King sent someone here, or worse still came in person, and found our new ally to be a drunken, discourteous thug who eats like a pig. Imagine if he talked to the King as he spoke to us tonight, or spat at his feet! And how can we trust an ally who behaves like an animal?" Sir Richard stood and strode toward the door, taking a towel from a servant to wipe his hands. Handing the cloth back, he turned to the abbot. "He'll be safe as long as he's my guest, but after he leaves I'll think again. It's a dangerous journey through the mountains, and the pilgrims would be safer if he were dead, my lord Abbot."

Left alone, the abbot reflected that he too might have been as angered, had it been his hospitality that was so insulted.



"Cecco, are you sure this will work?" the young monk whispered to his companion as they stole along the narrow road.

"Brother, I assure you. My cousin was made an exorcist by the Bishop himself, and later learned to command as well as to drive away these spirits. This was his book."

The scribe hugged the tome closer to his chest as he glanced into the trees, afraid that someone might be watching to report their blasphemy, but also aware that less wholesome, less human creatures might walk the woods in the dark.

Arriving at the crossroads, the scribe took out six candles and placed them on the ground, lighting them. The previous time that the pair had attempted the ritual the wind had extinguished the candles and foiled their spell before it was begun, but this night was calm and the candles remained alight.

"This spirit can make me sacristan, you say?" the monk asked earnestly, not for the first time.

"As I said, it can tell you when the current sacristan will die and what you must do to replace him. If you wish, it will kill the man for you, but that is your business."

The scribe traced out the circle on the ground and filled it with the required inscriptions and symbols, casting handfuls of salt as directed, and eventually produced from a bag a cat, which he killed with a trembling hand. Then, standing back from the circle, he began to intone words from the book:

"I conjure and command you, most wicked fiend, I bind and ensnare you, by the power of the Lord Almighty and the Holy Lamb, His Son, that you will do whatever I command. Quake in terror as I utter the names of God who cast you from Heaven and of the angels which overcame you. By the Word made Flesh I command you. By Jesus of Nazareth I command you. By he who created you I command you to tell me what I would know or do what I require. I conjure, exorcize and ensorcer you, oh lying spirit, by the power of truth."

The night was quiet and the woods still. The candles flickered slightly as a warm breeze moved the leaves of the trees. A twig cracked not far from the road.



The monk and the scribe looked at each other, and at the woods where shadows seemed to shift and congeal. Another breeze whispered through the branches and another twig broke, and the two turned and fled toward the town, praying to John the Baptist and the Virgin Mary and the Apostles as they ran.



"... And now I, Lord Angus Lackwitt, three hundred and second in line to the throne of Iceland, will attempt a feat to startle and amaze you! I, who have performed before seven kings, seven hundred lords and innumerable other layabouts, will juggle brands of hellish fire!

The crowd roared with derision and laughter, as the jester's assistant dipped a number of brands into a jug of oil. Some of the theigns shifted uneasily, muttering about not tolerating such insults, but fools are expected to ridicule and can say almost anything in the name of comedy.

"Scuttlebutt!"

"My lord!" the assistant cringed with practiced obsequiousness.

"The first..." the jester stood, facing the crowd with his feet spread apart "... flaming..." and his face fixed in a mask of mock-heroism "... brand!"

"The first flaming brand!" the assistant cried, placing the stick in Lackwitt's outstretched hand.

"Scuttlebutt! The second... flaming... brand!"

"My lord! The second flaming brand."

"The third... flaming... brand!"

"The third flaming brand!" Scuttlebutt tossed the stick, and Lackwitt began to juggle them, making it seem a great effort, though in truth he could juggle six brands with ease. The crowd applauded.

"You see, my lords and ladies..."

"The fourth flaming brand!" Scuttlebutt exclaimed with glee, tossing in the fourth.

"Scuttlebutt, I can't..."

"The fifth flaming brand my lord — and look, the sixth!" Scuttlebutt grinned at the crowd, Lackwitt made it seem an impossible task, and the people roared with laughter. "And my lord — the seventh flaming brand!"

At this Lackwitt let the sticks fall one by one as Scuttlebutt cowered sheepishly.

"Scuttlebutt!"



"My lord?" he cringed.

"You are making a fool of me!" The crowd applauded the irony.

"My lord!"

"We must prove to these people that I am a master juggler, and not the fool you make me seem! Lie down on the ground, Scuttlebutt!"

"But my lord!" Scuttlebutt protested, adopting his most pathetic expression.

"The ground!" Waiting until Scuttlebutt lay at his feet, Lackwitt continued. "And now my lords and ladies, I will juggle flaming brands above the prone form of my friend Scuttlebutt!"

The other shrieked lamentably, "No, no, it is too dangerous!"

"This is not dangerous, my lords and ladies — is it now?"

"No!" the crowd chorused, and the jester reflected that nothing made men laugh more than cruelty.

"If it were dangerous, I would sprinkle Scuttlebutt with oil!" Lackwitt exclaimed seizing the jug of water from beside the jug of oil. "And what is more," he cried, "I should juggle blindfolded!" And he pulled a small sack from his belt.

But as he poured the water over Scuttlebutt and put the sack over his face, a drunken Highlander — who had doubtless seen through the deception — ran from the crowd, seized the real jug of oil, and dowsed Scuttlebutt with the liquid. The crowd roared even louder.

Lackwitt stood stunned. Through the mesh of the sack's fibres he could see exactly what was happening, and although he could easily juggle three brands this would be a disastrous time to fail. And yet there were many influential lords in the audience, without whose patronage he might not have a living. He could not risk dropping one of the brands. But he could not risk ruining his act by halting now.

For a long second Lackwitt groped for a way out of the dilemma as Scuttlebutt's expression turned from mock to true terror. And then he began to juggle.



The Bishop of Tripoli sat in his dimly lit chambers, prodding at his dinner with a knife. The Baron of Gibelcar was a hospitable man, but insisted upon feeding the clergy with white meat while he ate fine beef and mutton. The bishop longed to return to his own palace, where he could eat what he pleased behind closed doors.

Two sets of footsteps sounded in the corridor outside, and after a cursory knock upon the door the Bishop's servant entered, followed by a gaunt young knight.

"Thank-you, Brother," he dismissed the servant, "and come in, my son."

The knight walked stiffly across to him, knelt and kissed his ring. "My lord Bishop."

"You must be Adam the Cypriot? You may stand."

"My father was Tomier de Valence, but I was born in Limassol," the man answered defensively. Simply being called "Cypriot" said nothing of his noble rank.

"Quite." The Bishop took another mouthful of oily fish. "Tell me, Adam the Cypriot, why do the Levantines cook everything in olive oil, hmm?" The remark seemed rhetorical, and Adam did not answer.

"In any case," the Bishop sat back, "You asked to see me."

"I sent a servant to you in Tripoli, my lord."

"I do not give audiences to commoners, Adam. If he had carried a letter from you I would have received it. And now you asked to see me and I granted an audience. What can I do for you, my son?"

The knight paused, searching for the right words, but eventually chose a direct approach. "You have the ear of the Count of Tripoli, my lord."

"Certainly. When he chooses to listen to me."



"Then I would ask that you recommend me to him, my lord. I have served the Baron of Gibelcar for seven years, and can advance no further in his service. I have fought well, and led his troops in several skirmishes. I do not believe he has a bad word to say about me."

"You seek a patron who may one day reward you with lands of your own, hmm? It is good that a young man should wish to better himself." The Bishop eyed the knight with distaste, and pondered his blatant subterfuge. "However, just last year Ascalon fell, and Jaffa, and Acre, hmm? And now Saladin winters at Qaddas, a day's ride from here? Gibelcar will fall next spring, as well you know, and you are trying to find an honorable way to leave this place and save your skin. The Count of Tripoli does not take cowards into his service."

The Cypriot turned red in the face, "I do not believe that the Moors will take Gibelcar, and the Crusaders. . ."

"Then you are a fool. Gibelcar is done for, and the Crusade will take years to get here. Tripoli itself will likely fall, and next month I shall take a ship for Cyprus. My cathedral will burn as well without me. But I shall do you two favors, Adam. First, I will not tell the Baron that you planned to desert him. Second, I will say nothing to the Count. When this fighting is done, if there is still a County of Tripoli, I will recommend you if you fight well for your Baron."

"Thank you, my lord Bishop." Adam grimaced and knelt, turned and left.

"Remember, my son," the Bishop's words stopped him at the door. "Those who die fighting for the Holy Land are assured a place in Heaven, and Saladin often treats prisoners better than we do."

"I hope that you enjoy Cyprus, my lord."









These are the words of His Grace the Archbishop of Mainz, to all ecclesiastics within his jurisdiction, and to all temporal lords.

There is no doubt that the Jew is the most accursed of men, damned for his murder of the Saviour, Christ our Lord. And for their crimes, God will see that they are punished justly, and here on earth they suffer fitting forfeiture. Thus, a Jew may not bear witness against a Christian in any court. In many lands each Jew is held to be the personal property of the King, while in others they must wear distinctive dress or some badge to show their race. Equally, it is right and fitting that if any Christian should marry with a Jew, the Jew must convert and be baptized, renouncing her former blasphemies.

However, while it is forbidden for Jews to usurp for themselves privileges which are not permitted to them by law, they ought not to suffer any disadvantage in those privileges which have been granted to them — as His Holiness the Pope has oft repeated.

There have lately been too many instances of Christian lords trampling upon the privileges of the Jews — most often for private gain, inspired by the deadly sin of avarice — and it is my duty to remind those with authority what privileges have been granted to the Jews by the popes and councils of the Holy Church.

No Christian may compel them or any one of their group to come to baptism unwillingly. But if any one of them should wish to accept the sacrament of baptism, without compulsion and of true conviction, then he shall be made a Christian without any intrigue.

No Christian shall presume to seize, imprison, wound, torture, mutilate, kill or inflict violence upon them, unless some crime has manifestly been committed, when the proper authorities shall deal with the case without malice.

No one shall disturb them in any way during the celebration of their festivals, by day or by night, with clubs or stones or anything else.

No one shall exact any compulsory service of them, unless it be that which they have been accustomed to pay in former times.



No one shall dare to devastate the cemeteries of the Jews, or to dig up their corpses for the sake of holding them for ransom — as has happened hereabouts of late.

Moreover, it has been said, most slanderously, that the Jews are responsible for the disappearance of children, whom they are said to offer as sacrifice in bloody rituals. There is not, and has never been, any evidence that such rituals occur, and yet upon this silly pretext many Jews are seized and detained.

Often, Jews charged with such imaginary crimes are not even released when the lost babes are found alive and well, and it must be noted that such charges are most often made by folk who hope somehow to profit from the Jews' misfortunes.

Successive blessed popes (Calixtus, Eugene, Alexander and Clement) have affirmed that although the Jews persist in their blasphemous stubbornness, still we Christians should offer them the shield of our protection through the clemency of Christian piety. It is expected that those Christians who have forgotten the Church's pronouncements on these matters might hereby be reminded of the privileges which the Jews have been granted.



In order that those unfamiliar with markets and trading should not be overcharged by unscrupulous vendors, I have compiled the following list of prices. These are given in French pennies, and should be adjusted for areas where the coinage is of greater or lesser value. Readers should also be aware that prices may vary according to season and local dearth or plenty.

A chicken should cost around four deniers, a rabbit five and a hare twelve deniers. Red meat is, of course, usually preferred to pale flesh, and half a pound of reasonable meat — ham, mutton or ox-beef — should suffice for one man for one day, costing two to three deniers. Bacon is cheaper, pork dearer, and venison usually impossible to buy. Sufficient fish for one day may cost between one and three deniers, luxurious fishes (like salmon) being dearer still.

Sufficient tourte (coarse brown bread) for one day might cost one or two deniers, but the price varies according to the abundance of the previous year's harvest — good harvests meaning low prices. White breads may be double the price, and rye bread or horse bread around half a penny.

Dried fruit, almonds and rice cost around two deniers per pound.

A large jar of vinegar should cost four deniers, and cooking oils eight deniers — except for olive oil at fifteen. Five pounds of salt costs only two deniers, but pepper and most other spices are four deniers for a single ounce. Saffron, most expensive of all, may cost over a shilling per ounce.

A gallon of cheap drink — weak beer or watered wine — may be bought for as little as one and a half deniers, and may then be watered down further, so that a man might survive for a day on one denier's worth of drink. However, fine, strong ale or cider might cost as much as ten deniers, and good wines might be even more expensive.

The costs of clothing vary, mainly according to the price of fabrics used. A simple long tunic and pair of trousers (or a coarse monk's habit) may cost as little as ten deniers. A fine wool, cotton or linen garment may cost fifteen shillings, and silks, velvets and taffeta are twice that price. Fur linings (usually squirrel or marten) add two or three pounds to the value of a garment. Some great magnates — such as the King of France — are rumored to spend over one hundred pounds on stately robes each year.



Shoes cost seven deniers, boots ten. A pair should last six months, but royal messengers (who travel on foot) are given a shoe-allowance of around five shillings per year. A purse costs two deniers, and a leather pouch four.

Livestock prices depend upon the quality of each animal, and upon how common a creature is to the locale. Sheep cost around forty deniers each, pigs seventy. A cow costs just over one pound.

Riding horses cost between one and two pounds each, a particularly fine animal may cost up to fifteen pounds, and a destrier (war horse) up to one hundred. (Other forms of transport may be cheaper: a rowing boat costs ten shillings, a large barge twenty pounds, and a seagoing merchant ship less than one hundred pounds. A peasant's cart may be bought for as little as a pound, while a noble's "chariot" might cost nearer twelve.)



To the Archbishop of Mainz, from Father Wendel, of the Church of Our Lady, Speyer.

On behalf of the many clergy of the town of Speyer and the surrounding diocese, I wish to ask that Your Grace intervene on our behalf with our own bishop.

Ever since these lands were saved from paganism, it has been our custom, as in many countries, to bless the bells which are installed in our church towers. Naturally you are familiar with this practice, and with the ceremony involved. Our new bishop, however, brands the practice a heathen rite, saying that elements of it — such as the dousing of the bell with water and the naming of it — are pagan practices, amounting to the veneration of inanimate objects. Consequently, he has endeavored to ban the practice, though I fear his edict will not be heeded.

For if our bells are not blessed in holy water and the holy spirit, cleansed of any evil and dedicated to the Lord, then how can they properly serve their purpose? Would it be right to call the pious to prayer with the clanging of base bells?

And what of the other functions which our bells fulfill? If the death of a parishioner be marked by a bell which is not blessed, would that serve to make his neighbors mindful of their own mortality or speed his soul to the bosom of our lord?

Our bells are rung to warn of danger, to call God's aid in our peril, and to call men to pray for His aid in our time of need. During storms we ring bells to keep lightning from striking the church. Could a common bell, not blessed in any way, aid us in our peril?

Church bells are known and expected to put evil spirits to flight. How could they do this if not blessed?

Moreover, we urge you to consider the other things which holy water might be used to bless, and to ponder whether a church's bell is less suitable. We bless the staves of pilgrims, the ships of merchants and the fields around a village. Why, then, not our own bells?

We beseech Your Grace that you might write to our bishop, and instruct him to revoke his edict. We ask this for the sake of all the souls which we minister to, and beg that no priest be forced to choose between imperilling his flock and disobeying his bishop.



# DEALING WITH TOWNS AND TRADE

## CHAPTER SIX

Many brethren, having been born in the country and educated at our abbey, have no real idea how to deal with towns and their inhabitants. Yet some brothers may find themselves dispatched to a town or city on some errand, perhaps to hire laborers, contact a craftsman or the town's ruler, to meet with a bishop, or merely to preach.

Therefore, I include this brief gathering in the prayerful hope that it may give the reader a basic understanding of what he might encounter in towns and how to react appropriately.

### Money

Anyone who wishes to deal with townsfolk or merchants, or to attend markets or fairs, must first understand the complicated system of coinage used by such folk.

The standard coin, anywhere, is the "penny" (or "denarius," giving the standard abbreviation "d"). In theory, two hundred and forty pennies may be minted from one pound weight of silver, but in practice different pennies contain different purities of silver and are therefore of different values.

The English coin is the most valuable, being fairly pure, and two hundred and forty pennies here are worth about one third of a pound of pure silver. The pennies of France and

Rome are also good, although they are worth perhaps half of their English equivalents, and many Italian pennies are worth only a quarter of English coins.

Every ruler usually has his own coinage minted, and when they are in sudden need of extra cash — to pay soldiers, for example — they tend to debase their coins in order to gain more money from the same value of metal. Thus, not only do the pennies of neighboring states vary in value, but coins minted in the same place at different times may also have different purities.

Smaller coins also exist — such as the half-penny (ha'penny) and quarter-penny, called a "farthing" in England and oboles and half-oboles in France. These are used to make most small purchases, and are sometimes called "black money" because they have so little silver and so much copper in them that they are dark in color and often tarnish.

Larger coins also exist, or may soon appear. Certain Italian and German states — where pennies are worth very little — plan to mint a coin called a "grosso" (in Italy) or "groat" (in Germany). These are purer, larger silver coins worth four pence each.

Gold coins may also be encountered in the east, and sometimes even in the ports of the western Mediterranean, such as Venice, Genoa and Barcelona. The most respected gold coin is the nomisma of Constantinople, worth perhaps one hundred Italian or twenty-five English pennies. In



Iberia and the Mediterranean, the Moorish "dinar" may also be found, varying wildly in value and purity but never worth as much as a Nomisma.

## Moneys of Account

In keeping accounts and in talking about finance, merchants, clerics and nobles alike use moneys of account — shillings and pounds, or marks.

These are not real moneys. There are no shilling, pound or mark coins. They are accounting conventions, designed to make book-keeping and transactions simpler.

A shilling is twelve pence. A pound is almost always twenty shillings (or two hundred and forty pennies).

Occasionally the old-fashioned method is used, of expressing large sums in terms of gold and silver marks. Here one silver mark is eighty pennies, and nine silver marks make one gold mark.

## Money Changers

In most countries it is illegal to use foreign coins for transaction — particularly in countries like France and England where the native currency is relatively pure. Such laws are usually designed to protect those who do not understand the intricacies of foreign coinage, and should not be flouted.

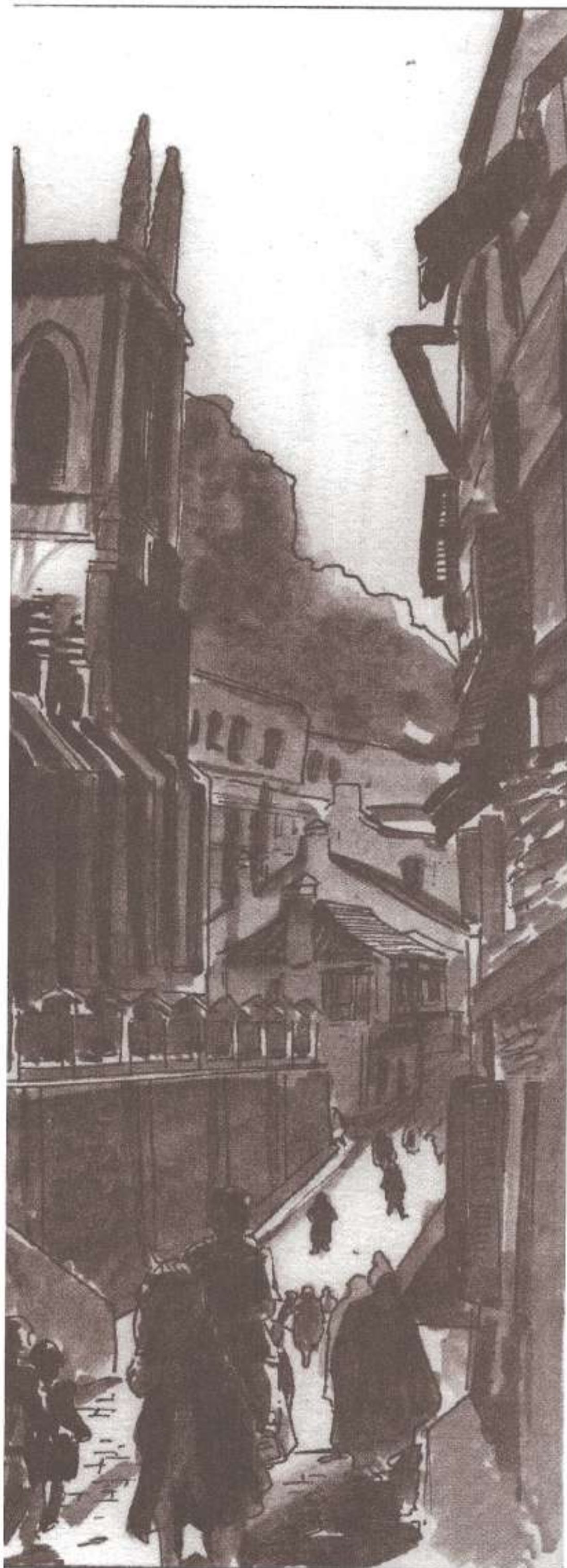
Ports, towns and cities of such countries have licensed money changers, and these people alone are permitted to change foreign for domestic money. Small towns will have just one such officer, while large cities may have dozens. All charge the same small fee for their services.

Those wishing to understand the relative values of local coins are advised to find a money-lender's stall at a market or fair. Signs are usually posted for the benefit of the literate, explaining how many pennies of other nationalities are equivalent to one local penny.

## Calculating Money

I urge readers to make all but the most basic calculations with an abacus or counting-board, and to distrust any merchant who claims to be able to do complex mental arithmetic.

A few scholars who have mastered the Moorish numerals claim that mental calculation is thus made much easier, but this is hypothetical. Every merchant or noble I have ever met is familiar only with our Roman numerals, and it will be a long time before they are persuaded to learn any new-fangled heathen method of counting.





## Entering and Leaving Towns

Almost all towns and cities are bounded by walls, and where roads breach these defenses, gates are built. In some backward towns these may simply be crude barricades, but they are typically sturdy wooden doors, often with a gatehouse built about them.

Each gate is always guarded. A sergeant is given custody of the gate, living next to or in the house above the gate. During the day he stands and supervises those going in or out, and at night might be woken by those wishing to enter urgently. Still, these sergeants are always ordered to let only truly important people or expected messengers through after dark.

In large towns, in cities and on market days the sergeant may be helped by other armed men, who ensure that he is not bullied or intimidated by travelers. Rarely, in important cities a garrison of soldiers may be posted at the gate.

As centers of trade, towns are always happy for goods to be brought in from outside. The sergeant mainly watches travelers themselves, ensuring that no known criminals, lepers or heretics are allowed in. He is obliged to turn away anyone who he believes might be a nuisance — so that, for example, those with criminal brands are unlikely to be allowed through.

Still, he may look briefly at livestock, particularly at the marks on their haunches, in order to make sure that the animals are not stolen. He might also be suspicious of anyone bringing hefty or copious weaponry into the town.

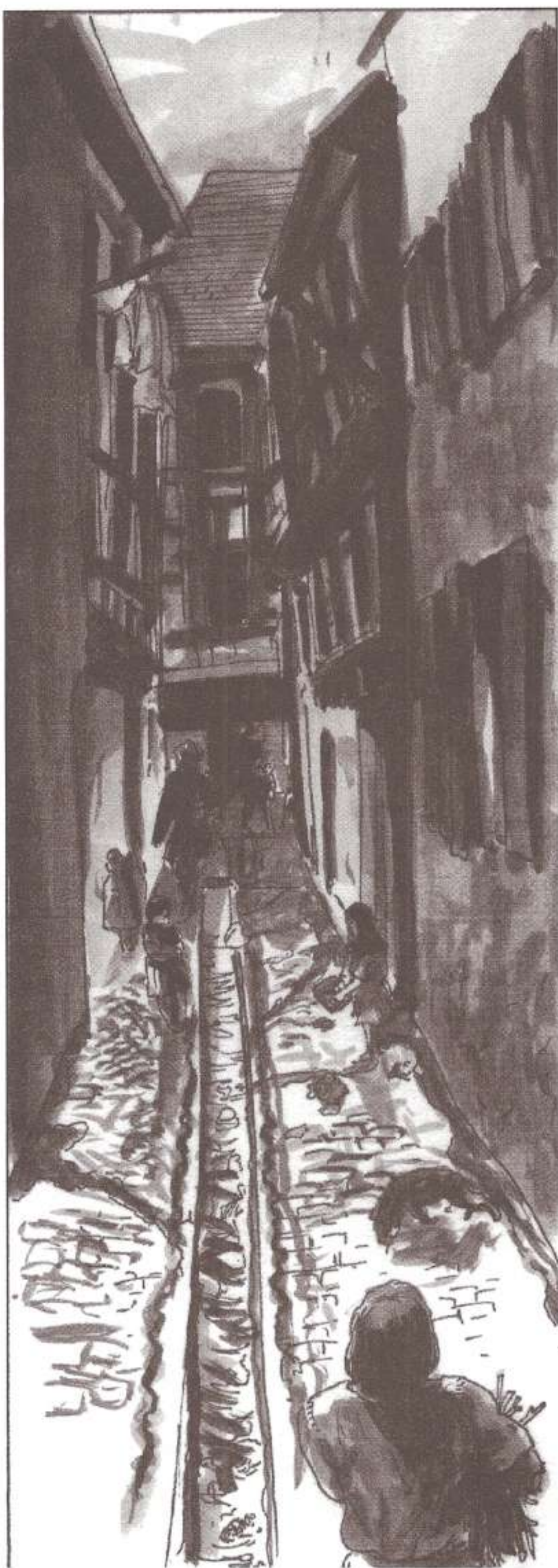
Conversely, the sergeant is always delighted to let troublemakers leave the town, but may be more concerned with their goods. Suspicious-looking folk may be searched for stolen objects, and the sergeant will also try to ascertain what trade goods are being carried out. Many towns levy a toll on goods exported, and the sergeant is obliged to collect the full amount owed.

## Street Stalls

A craftsman's workshop is also his home, and customers should not expect to be invited in off the street. Instead, they must usually be content to stand in the road and survey goods on display.

Often a trestle table is set up outside the craftsman's window. The windows' shutters may also open outward, folding up and down to form awnings and display-tables.

A young child may be left outside or inside the window to watch for customers (and to look out for thieves) and alert his or her father if anyone approaches. Often the craftsmen down their tools and head out into the street to greet potential customers, cajoling and persuading them with friendly aggression.





Sometimes goods on display are samples and are not for sale, as most craftsmen either make goods to order or to sell at market. Some do not even attend the markets because their work is in such demand that they work only to order. Others dislike taking orders because they know their wares will sell well at market with those from outside town. In any case, buyers should be suspicious of salesmen who have a large stock for sale between markets. If their work was any good they would not have such a surplus.

## Market Stalls

Every town — and some villages — holds a market once a week, or at least once a month. Large cities may have several markets every week, each specializing in a particular commodity, such as cloth, horses, grain or wine.

Almost all towns have special market places, open areas of grass — or more often mud — near to the center of town, and usually close to the cathedral, castle or other important buildings. However, a few towns hold markets in broad streets rather than a single area, or even expect stallholders to set up in the usual narrow roads.

Here trestle tables are set up with cloth or wooden awnings, and the town might sometimes supply a thatched roof around the side of the market for stalls to be set up beneath. Wares are lain out on tables, and merchants wander from stall to stall amongst pilgrims, travelers, farmers, pedlars, entertainers, beggars and thieves.

Complicated local rules sometimes govern the opening and operation of the market, and local guild members are always given preferential treatment. Outsiders may be forbidden from setting up stalls, or may not buy goods before a certain time, for example. Travelers should check with local guildsmen as to the rules of the market.

## Food Vendors

From wheat the bakers make finely sifted white bread (called pandamain or wastel), through fine brown breads (cheat bread), to coarser loaves (tourte). Most common folk eat maslin bread (made from mixed wheat and rye flour and quite sufficient for the wants of a monk or humble traveler), branbread, barley bread or even horse bread — a hard, tasteless slab made from oats, beans, peas and any other surplus grains, intended to be fed to horses, pigs and beggars.

Specialist bakers also sell pastries (often filled with vegetables and herbs), gingerbread and cakes (essentially sweetened and spiced breads). Trenchers — disposable or edible plates, generally used at banquets — are also available from bakers, but may equally be cut from any loaf of stale bread.

Made from the milk of cows, sheep or goats, innumerable cheeses are available, the best being the softest and the cheapest being impossibly hard. Cheese makers do exist in towns, but most is brought in to market by outlying peasants.

Although milk is unsuitable for adult consumption, those traveling with children, the elderly or infirm may need to buy it from general food vendors, pedlars or peasants. Eggs are acquired from the same sources.

Vegetables are also sold at market by peasants (in Italy and the Balkans beans are more plentiful than grains), and sold on again by vendors and pedlars during the week. Leeks, lettuces, cabbages, rapes and carrots are all common, and beans, peas, turnips and onions are easily preserved throughout the year, and thus always available. Fruit is more seasonal, and varies wildly according to the area — apples, quinces and pears are available in the north, along with dried imported fruits, while oranges, lemons, figs and other fruits flourish further south.

Wild hazelnuts and cobs may be gathered by peasants and sold at market in the north. Superior nuts — such as almonds — are farmed in the south.

At markets, animals and poultry are sold by peasants to butchers who supply local households, and to inns and general food vendors. The range of meats available depends upon the local livestock and season. After Martinmas (November eleventh) there is always a great deal of choice, although during the winter almost all meat is preserved — salted or smoked.

Game birds, shot or netted, also come to market — in northern Christendom examples include pheasant, partridge, heron, gull, egret, quail, plover and thrush.

Fish are also available from its producers (who rear the animals in ponds or catch them from sea or river), fishmongers or general vendors. Throughout northern Christendom one can always find herring, which is exported from the Baltic in vast quantities.

Spices, uniquely, may be purchased direct from spice merchants, who never expect to sell large quantities of such expensive goods and willingly sell a single ounce.

Wine is available from merchants in large quantities, or from lesser vendors in more useful measures.

Beer, ale and cider are likewise sold in bulk by their brewers and in smaller measures by vendors. However, travelers should note that none of these drinks travel well, and ale in particular becomes foul and mouldy within a few days.

Purchasers should always be careful that they are not buying inferior merchandise. Bakers may use excess yeast to make loaves appear larger; wine and milk may be watered down; cheese may be darkened by soaking it in meat-stock; and stale flesh is sometimes pounded to soften it.



## Inns

A typical city inn is a two- or three-story building, with bed-chambers at the top, an eating hall below that, and the kitchen, pantry and generous stabling beneath or behind that.

Inns serve meals shortly after dusk, and require at least one hour's warning if a person wishes to dine. Late arrivals may have to make do with bread and cheese, but the inn probably shuts its doors to newcomers soon after dusk. A light breakfast is served at dawn (a little bread and cheese, and perhaps porridge, supplemented by meat for an extra charge), finishing in time for guests to attend morning Mass before leaving town.

Both breakfast and dinner are usually included in the price paid for lodgings, but guests must make special arrangements for lunch, either asking the ostler (innkeeper) to provide it or going elsewhere.

Ostlers may be nervous about letting guests stay more than one night. Many towns have laws by which an innkeeper may be held responsible for his guests' misbehavior if they have stayed with him for two nights or more. The laws are designed to make ostlers more careful about whom they entertain, and therefore encourage dubious travelers to pass through town quickly. Nobles who behave with dignity and monks of clear virtue may be welcomed for successive nights, but suspicious persons will be denied a second night's lodging.

## Taverns

In addition to inns, there are other establishments which sell meals and drink to customers. These taverns serve hot or cold lunches and hot suppers, as well as local beverages.

Lunch is usually served from two hours before noon until an hour after noon, and typically consists of a stew which simmers constantly in the kitchen and is served with bread and cheese. Most customers are poor craftsmen, whose wives work with them in the workshops and thus have no time to buy or prepare food, so they have to eat out. On market days taverns are occupied by additional customers, peasants and pedlars who have come to trade.

The tavern may also serve drinks or light snacks at Noonschenche (three hours after noon), when laborers traditionally take a break from their work.

In the evenings a larger meal is consumed, where baked meat or fish may be served with pottage instead of stew. Craftsmen and laborers are again the clients, and they may sit and eat and drink to unwind after their day's work. The meal is usually served about one hour after dusk, when curfew regulations often demand that doors are bolted and no further customers be admitted. Because of the curfew, taverns may be obliged to close down, customers leaving an hour after that.

Those who can afford servants to cook for them, or whose wives attend to meals, have no reason to frequent taverns. However, in more prosperous areas these establishments often strive to maintain a respectable image — particularly at lunchtime, when they may hope to entertain traders and petty nobles who have come to the town for the day on business.

## Tailors and Clothiers

Tailors rarely sell clothes from their stalls, and for this reason are rarely found at market. Rather, each item is created for the specific purchaser, measurements, fabrics, cut and dye being discussed at the tailor's workshop. Only the rougher tailors make clothes in the hope of an immediate sale, their wares likely to be limited to peasant tunics and hoods, and perhaps a rough pair of trousers. Only cloaks — which may be sought by damp or cold travelers — may be found ready-made in a variety of qualities.

Furriers often make the finest clothes, contracting out to tailors to make the basic garment, and then adding the fur lining themselves, dramatically increasing the price.

Shoemakers, on the other hand, rarely work to order, but prepare many different sizes of shoes to sell at market — where many travelers may be found in need of replacements for their disintegrating footwear. Demand is always high for shoes. A peasant must replace his footwear at least once or twice a year; a professional messenger — unless mounted — would not expect a pair to last a month.

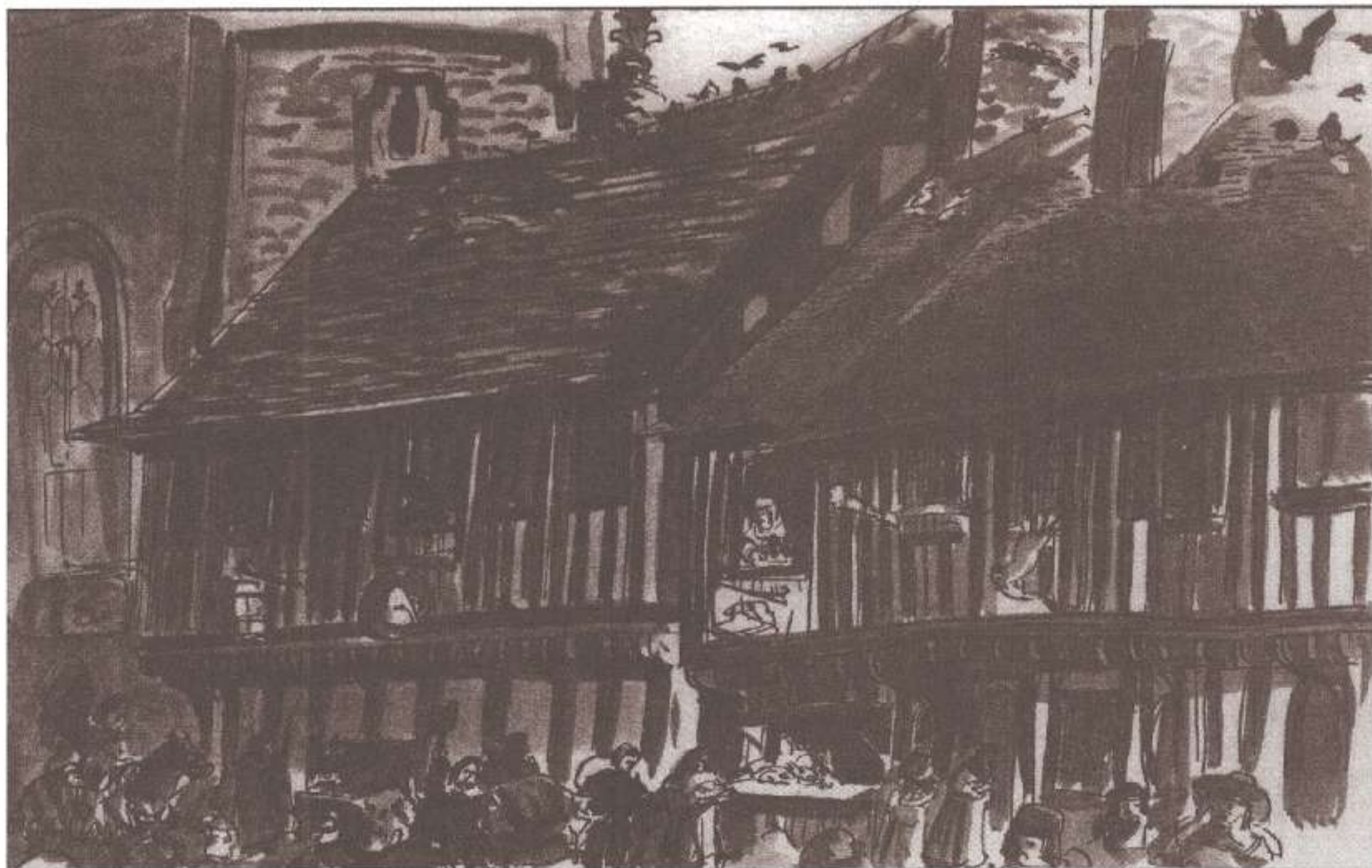
## Copyists

Monks and scholars may sometimes be in need of the services of a scribe. Easily recognized, a copyist has no wares on display like other tradesmen, but nails a piece of parchment by his door, with samples of the types of script his workshop can imitate. And unlike normal tradesmen, a copyist is often all too happy to invite a customer into his shop — for their patrons are inevitably wealthy people, and not to be left standing on the street.

A copyist will discuss with the customer the fineness of parchment, type of lettering, quality of illumination and manner of binding, showing examples of all these, and then giving a quote for the production of an entire book. He will subcontract the work of illumination and binding to other craftsmen around the city, and also arrange for the purchase of parchment, so that all the customer has to do is lend him the original text to be copied.

The production of an entire Bible, well-illuminated and illustrated, would take fifteen months. A short manual — on medicine or law, for example — might be completed in under one week, assuming that the illumination and binding are merely functional. A simple legal document or letter could be written in a flourishing script in a single hour. Not having to attend chapel eight times each day, the lay scribe works much faster than the monk.





## Goldsmiths

Another notable craftsman, with whom the wealthy and influential must deal, is the goldsmith. He, like the copyist, understands that those rich enough to afford his services should be well treated, and deals with him are not concluded in the street.

Nor would he set up a stall in a market. Indeed, important customers summon goldsmiths to see them, while others call at and are invited into the workshop. Contracts are invariably prepared by a notary and signed by the patron before the work begins.

Goldsmiths work precious metals (gold and silver) and deal with gems. They make rings and clasps, pendants, spoons, plates, candlesticks and goblets, crucifixes, caskets and reliquaries, effigies, crowns, signet rings, brooches, beakers, silver book covers, croziers, knife-fittings and chalices.

They also sell gems, and in certain large cities all trade in gems must be conducted by or through them; they are expert in assessing the value of the materials they work with. They deal with rubies, emeralds, sapphires and turquoises from the east, amethysts from Germany, opals and garnets from Russia, amber from the Baltic, and jet from England and Spain, all of which are rubbed and polished until smooth and then set in silver or gold.

## Other Craftsmen

Other, more common, craftsmen may be approached in the usual way, just as any other stall would be approached. Most are happy to work to fill specific orders, and may not even require a down payment or formal contract. Most orders, after all, are likely to be small, and do not justify the expense of employing a notary. And many common items can be sold at market if the customer does not come to collect them.

Craftsmen who produce standard finished products — potters, purse-makers, sack-makers, and rope-makers, as examples — almost always set up stalls in markets and may be surprised to receive customers during the week.

Others — notably cartwrights, boatwrights and coopers — do not attend market because their products are too bulky. Blacksmiths equally expect customers to come to their smithies, where they shoe horses while the customer waits, or make tools and components to fill contracts. Furniture makers, carpenters and locksmiths are likely to send samples to a market, rather than finished goods for sale. Brewers and butchers, by the same token, prefer to sell to vendors rather than directly to the public.

A third group of craftsmen are also absent from the market — those who work at the behest of merchants or other craftsmen, rather than for the public. Weavers, dyers and fullers, for example, usually work for cloth-merchants;



illuminators and book-binders work for copyists; and weaponsmiths and armorers are invariably in the permanent service of noblemen.

## Barbers

Although not craftsmen, as such, a barber or barber-surgeon is a man whom most well-to-do townsfolk must visit occasionally.

A barber's primary tasks, of course, are to cut the hair and shave the face (and, in a cleric's case, the tonsure). Many folk make do with their own sharpened knives, but the less impoverished are delighted to pay a skilled barber to make a haircut less lop-sided or a shave less painful. Since most men desire shaven features, a barber's services may be required every day.

Most customers simply knock at the barber's door and are let in by his assistant or wife, waiting until the man is free to tend to them. Men who consider themselves of note, however, send servants to fetch the barber to them, or to make an appointment for a visit the following day. Barbers are always happy to call on wealthy customers — as they charge extra for the service. Truly great men, however, keep a barber constantly in their household to shave them every day, and those who fear assassination are always very careful about whom they allow to hold blades to their throats.



A barber's second function, of course, is to bleed customers. Blood is usually taken from the arm in order to remove harmful or unbalancing humors from the body (or so I am told), and to avoid illness many people are bled once each month.

Many barbers, called barber-surgeons, perform minor feats of surgery. They are no match for the rare university-trained surgeons, but can competently carry out minor operations. They may remove decayed teeth, pierce swellings, stitch up gashes in the flesh or cauterize wounds. Some claim to be able to remove stones from the belly, or perform trepanation or castration with reasonable survival rates.

## Makers' Marks

Through their own choice or through the force of local law or guild rules, many craftsmen stamp or carve a personal mark into their produce. Bakers stamp their seal into their loaves, potters likewise into their clay; coopers and carpenters carve theirs into their products.

Illustrious craftsmen, like goldsmiths, are rarely compelled to do this, and many others are either unable to do so (such as skinnners or brewers) or are not compelled to. Marks are most usually put on objects which may easily be defective, such as barrels which may leak or bread which may be underweight, so that those who make shoddy goods may thus be identified and punished.

## Honest Merchants

Merchants buy goods in large quantities and arrange for their shipment to be sold elsewhere. They are not interested in trading with small quantities of goods, and so deal only with producers, bulk consumers (such as craftsmen and wealthy households) and other merchants.

They deal primarily in cloth, but also buy and sell metals, wine, hides, pigments, grain, timber, spices, preserved fish and other foodstuffs.

Merchants often make much of their money through regular agreements. So, cloth merchants may compete for contracts with major wool producers, such as abbeys or noble estates, for the sole right to buy their entire produce at a prearranged price, the contract usually lasting for seven years.

Having received delivery of a quantity of wool, merchants theoretically sell it in small consignments to weavers, who spin and weave it into unfinished cloth. The merchant then buys the cloth back and sells it to a fuller, who makes the cloth fit for use. Buying the fabric back again, the merchant may sell it on to a dyer before buying it back once again, then selling it to tailors and housewives to make clothes.



However, merchants are becoming increasingly aware that they cannot always trust on buying and reselling the cloth after each stage of its refinement. Why should a weaver not sell it direct to a fuller and he to a dyer?

Therefore, merchants who import raw wool usually sell it to weavers, fullers and dyers with an understanding that the cloth will be sold back to the same merchant at an agreed price. Thus the merchant is guaranteed a profit from each stage of the process, and the craftsmen become — in effect — his employees.

The same method is also used for leathers and other hides, where the merchant agrees on contracts with skinners and tanners before finally selling to the makers of shields, harness or saddles, shoes, scabbards, armor or belts. Metal and timber may be similarly handled.

Thus the individual craftsman inevitably becomes poorer for the merchant's profit. Since merchants control the availability of raw imports, a craftsman has no alternative but to agree to these terms.

## Usurers

The holy Church denounces and forbids usury, which is the lending of money for gain of any sort. Jews, however, have no care for our virtues, and thus indulge freely in this practice, lending money at extortionate rates of interest — often over fifty percent per year.

Even good Christians indulge in this practice, either blatantly or more often in disguised forms, and many money changers are also money lenders.

A Bill of Exchange is a document by which money is borrowed in one currency in one place (in order to purchase goods) on the condition that it is repaid at another prearranged place in that local currency (after the goods have been sold). Several large Italian merchant-families have representatives throughout Italy and as far abroad as Barcelona, Champagne and even Flanders, who maintain cash reserves to fund such loans.

Often, however, the value of the sum repaid exceeds the value borrowed, and such practice borders on the usurious. Worse still, there is sometimes a provision to repay the greater sum in the same place that the loan was made, and this is merely disguised usury.

Most shamefully, there are also pawnbrokers, who keep stalls in large markets or may be visited in their homes. They “buy” goods for a low price and agree to sell them back — at a realistic price — after a certain time. This, too, is merely a disguised form of usury.

## Notaries

Notaries are men who, with a little legal knowledge, draw up contracts and official deeds. They do not set up stalls but welcome customers to their homes or come out as requested. They rarely advertise themselves, but are known to all local merchants and can easily be sought out.

They draw up deeds exchanging land, agreements to pay in arrears for goods, Bills of Exchange, contracts between merchants and craftsmen, and occasionally wills. Well-used formulae are used in such documents, and they are designed to avoid argument and misunderstanding — which, considering the extortionate fees charged by lawyers, could become extremely expensive.

These and other documents usually bear the signatures of both parties involved, as merchants and better paid craftsmen are normally able to read and write, although lesser folk (like fullers and tanners) may simply make a scrawl in place of a signature. In addition, richer townsfolk (merchants, goldsmiths) have their own seals which they affix to such documents, as confirmation that the signature is their own.





## God's Penny

A custom common throughout northern Christendom is that of giving "God's Penny."

If a sale is agreed but the goods cannot be collected immediately — such as if an order is placed with a tailor, or a farmer agrees to fetch a wagon load of grain — a small deposit is paid, sometimes literally a penny but sometimes more. This down payment is called God's Penny.

If the producer fails to deliver the goods he must repay twice the God's Penny to the buyer. If the buyer cannot or does not wish to honor the agreement, the producer keeps the deposit.

This is simply designed to protect both parties. When small sums are involved the Penny may simply be handed over without ceremony — neighboring stallholders often acting as witnesses. When larger deals are struck, however, a notary may be called in to record the agreement and the payment of the Penny.

## Hours of Trading

Most craftsmen and vendors begin work at dawn, and continue their work until dusk. They break during the day for lunch (just before noon) and Noonschenche (three or four hours later). These pauses are usually longer in the summer and shorter in the winter, and in the south the weather often makes it too hot to work in mid-afternoon.

Towns usually forbid work after dark or before dawn, as the bustle annoys other folk or keeps them awake. A few trades, however, are exempt from this regulation. Taverns and inns may usually serve for two or three hours after dark, and bakers — whose bread must be fresh for early morning customers — are often permitted to work after dusk or before dawn.

## Church Services

Large town churches or cathedrals hold several Masses each day, and if a church is attached to a religious community the eight divine offices are also said, as in a monastery.

The first Mass is sung or said about half an hour after dawn, and is designed for travelers who may wish to receive the sacrament before departing. Other Masses follow until the mid-morning, after which any Mass held is for a particular purpose — to solemnize a wedding, to mark a funeral or to ease the passage of a deceased soul. On Sunday, however, a further Mass is usually sung at noon or before noon, and then Vespers three hours after noon, for the benefit of those who might come in from surrounding villages to praise God.

## Curfew

At dusk the ringing of a church bell marks the end of work and the closure of the gates. The town watch may take up position around the town or may begin to patrol the streets. Anyone found outside may be questioned as to their business.

After taverns have closed and inns have locked their doors, anyone in the street is immediately regarded with suspicion, as they have no conceivable reason to be out. They will be challenged and probably arrested by the watch.

This curfew continues until the church bell rings again to mark the break of dawn, when the watch ends its vigil, the gates open and the people return to their work.

## Lepers

Lepers are rarely tolerated in any town. No one wants to contract their illness, so they are forbidden from coming within town walls. The mayor or lord of a town may order any leper to leave, but emotional ties often make them loathe to do so. Many a man has hidden his leprous wife away so as not to lose her, and the problem is worsened by the rules of many leper hospitals, which refuse to accept a leper unless the head of the leper's household (husband or father) consents.

These hospitals provide a bed, meager food and a little work for the lepers, and have grown up outside the walls of many towns. Run by such holy orders as the Augustinians, hospitals cannot offer any cure for lepers, but may offer some solace for the outcasts. Theoretically a place here is free, but more crowded or impoverished hospitals may require donations to secure the admission and maintenance of a leper.

Poor lepers may become wandering beggars, always driven away from towns and villages, announcing their approach with the ringing of a handbell or a cry of "unclean," subsisting on the alms of monasteries and travelers. These unfortunates may often be seen begging on roads approaching a town, often gathering around the gates.

## Loose Women

Prostitutes are often treated under the same laws as lepers. Thus they may be banned from entering within city walls, and on discovery may be beaten, fined or simply expelled. Sheltering a prostitute is a crime, and the guilty householder may be punished by the removal of his door until the woman has left, or even by the loss of his house — which is dismantled wall-by-wall and post-by-post.

Some large towns and many cities accept the inevitability of prostitution and seek to control it. Here, specific houses — called stew houses — are permitted to be set up under certain conditions. The house must usually be in a specific, grotty part of town, which is generally outside the



walls. It must be administered by a married couple. The male administrator must act as head of the household, and must ensure that the house neither becomes a center for other crimes nor a nuisance to other householders in the area.

## Jews

Although the Jews rejected God, still we must as Christians be merciful and we must tolerate them. This is a sentiment often spoken by the Church, but rarely put into action.

The Jews act as usurers, but also as merchants, goldsmiths and other craftsmen, congregating in certain parts of a town. They are never found in the country, where nobles and peasants will not tolerate them, and are forbidden entry to many towns. Even in towns where they are permitted, there are often strict rules where they may live, as rulers try to contain them within one part of the city, fearing that they may undermine the Christian community if allowed to disperse.

Jews are not only feared, however, because they are blasphemers. It is also said that they eat babies, start plagues, poison fields and summon tempests. I am not aware that any of these charges have ever been proven, and have often observed Jews to be quite pleasant and courteous. But still, I would rather avoid them.

## Gaming

Disreputable inns and taverns are often the haunts of "professional" gamblers, who usually throw dice for profit. However, since such games of chance cannot yield any honest man a constant profit, one must suspect that they are somehow cheating in order to win.

Some have whispered that witchcraft or charms can bring such luck, but uneven dice, weighted to produce favorable rolls, have certainly been found. The gamer presumably uses sleight of hand to substitute these for the regular dice when appropriate, and one must assume that anyone despicable enough to use such deceptions might be likely to commit simple robbery or other crimes.

## Fire

The greatest fear of many townsfolk is fire, and the risk may seem very great. All houses have open fires, and many businesses use fires or kilns; unstable candles are normally used for lighting; rich mens' mattresses or paupers' beds are both simply masses of straw, and dry reeds are often used to cover earth floors. Walls, beams and upper floors are wooden, buildings are often crammed close together, and although many towns now try to discourage the use of thatch, it remains the usual roofing material.



In summer each householder may be obliged to keep a bucket or vat of water outside his front door, day and night, to combat fire. Public buildings may be used to store firehooks (used to pull down burning material), and some hooks may even be left outside in market places. Wealthy citizens are expected to store ladders accessibly.

To prevent conflagrations, tradesmen using kilns or fires may be expected to plaster and whitewash their walls. Buildings in stone may be subsidized, thatching may be banned. And crimes involving fire are strictly punished. Arson is always punished by execution, often death by burning; false alarms are punished by heavy fines; and those stealing firehooks or water buckets are hung.

## Violence

It is unfortunate that towns can sometimes become very violent places. Criminals facing mutilation or death for their crimes have little to lose by using arms against those who try to capture them. Bar brawls are fought with weapons as often as with fists.

Because of such violence, many towns have strict laws covering weapons. There is no problem with owning weapons, but carrying them is often discouraged and travelers may be expected to stow them away in their luggage or leave them at their lodgings. Natives of a town are rarely permitted to carry large weapons — unless the town's lord or council employs them to do so — and outsiders are usually



forbidden to carry any arms. Only nobles and personal guests of the city's mayor or lord may be exempt from these restrictions. The wearing of armor, though rarely explicitly banned, is considered very strange and perhaps threatening.

## The Watch

A small town — of perhaps one thousand souls — would have a watch of perhaps four people, all lightly armed and unarmored. These would be responsible for patrolling the market and investigating reports of crime and immorality. One of these should be awake through the night in case of fire, raising the alarm by blowing loudly on a horn. Another man should always be at the gate when it is open, in order to watch out for troublemakers and to extract tolls from merchants.

The larger the town, the larger the watch becomes. The more strangers and criminals a town entertains, the more important it becomes that watchmen are visibly armed — a mace and leather armor being the norm.

In big towns and cities, the watch in each area (or "ward") is organized by a respected member of the community, or alderman. He organizes three men to patrol the streets during the night and to watch for fires, and may provide them with horses. These or other men may also be paid to patrol the market. The patron also appoints a part-time deputy who investigates crimes and immorality. The entrances to towns, however, are not the responsibilities of the aldermen, but of special sergeants appointed to each gate.

## Hue and Cry

If anyone sees a crime in progress, he or she must raise an alarm immediately, and everyone else has an obligation to chase the culprit if they can. If a member of the watch calls a hue and cry, those failing to heed his call may be fined.

Thus a rabble of several hundred men may be raised to chase down a single criminal, which often results in the felon's capture.

## Punishment

If a town has bought a charter from the king or lord, it may administer its own justice, meaning that the mayor and his advisors judge important matters, and another man appointed by the town council tries petty offences. If the town is still under the control of the king, royally appointed judges sit. If the town is owned by a lesser lord, he or one of his appointees sits as judge. In any case, in the towns of France and Italy, judges are increasingly likely to have had a university training in law.

Unfortunately, some cases may never come before a proper court, as some people still insist on using the barbaric method of "trial by combat," whereby two ag-

grieved parties settle disputes with a fight to death or first blood. In some backward areas of the northeast, "trial by ordeal" may still be practiced.

In some parts of northern Christendom the old tradition persists that a man may escape punishment for a crime if the victim (or deceased victim's family) accepts a remuneration — money, goods or animals — instead.

Cases are usually decided by the judge on the basis of information brought forward by witnesses and the proof unearthed by town officials. Certain groups of people, however, may be legally debarred from testifying — such as women without their husbands' corroborations, Jews and children. A confession is rarely sought, but if it is required the accused may be encouraged by being roasted over a fire, having his teeth wrenched out, or having his fingers crushed.

Petty offenders may be flogged or even let off with a warning, if it is their first offence and the judges are inclined to exercise the Christian virtue of mercy. But justice is also necessary, and sin and crime cannot go unpunished. Thus petty thieves, vandals and swindlers may have an eye gouged out, may lose a hand, may be branded on the cheek or forehead, or may be expelled from the town and have their property impounded.

Those who falsify weights and measures, cheat on their taxes or make a public nuisance of themselves are likely to be fined, the monies taken being split between the judges and whomever owns the right of justice over the town (the town council, a lord or the monarch). The guilty party may also be publicly humiliated — placed in a pillory or stocks, or driven through the streets in a cart, branded with some symbol of the crime.

Those who fail to pay their debts may have their property confiscated to pay creditors.

Serious crimes are punishable by hanging, where the accused is pulled up by the throat until he chokes to death. Only nobles are permitted the more honorable and less painful option of death by beheading. Examples of serious crimes include major thefts (stealing a horse, for example, or emptying a merchant's coffers), assaulting a member of the watch, forging coins and murder. The hanged criminal's property is forfeit to the court.

The vilest of criminals — guilty of treason, witchcraft or heresy — are often burned at the stake.

## Hygiene

A final word must be said concerning the hygiene of towns and cities. They are all, without exception, filthy.

In the less developed towns, which resemble overgrown villages, animals are often kept inside the walls and are herded outside every morning to graze, urinating and defecating in the streets as they go. In busier and more cramped towns, waste may overflow from cesspits or — in poorer areas — may even be hurled straight into the street.



Before dawn, carters dig out waste pits and clear manure, then sell the muck to surrounding villages to fertilize their fields. At harvest time these people are often hired as casual labor in villages, and the dung goes uncollected and waste pits unemptied.

Blood and offal spill out into the streets from cramped butchers' shops. Fish entrails may be slung from fishmongers'. Flies swarm around such places.

Monks and others who expect to wash or even bathe may find it difficult to remain as clean as they would like. Fresh water is at a premium, as it must be carried or channelled from the river or a well — which may be some distance. Few inns have bathing facilities, and not all towns have public bath-houses.



"... the clear enemies of all Christians!" the Friar bellowed to the murmured approvals of the crowd. "Not only did they have the Savior crucified but they accepted their guilt: 'On the heads of our children be it!' they said. It is recorded in the Bible — and then they cried again for the death of the Savior!"

The rabbi turned to his friend: "We have heard enough — and I would suggest that we shouldn't stay." They turned and moved quietly toward the market place. A few jeered or spat as they left.

"I am worried, Rabbi Isaac, that if the rains do not come, our people will suffer. If the crops fail, then. . ." He paused as two young soldiers pushed roughly between them.

"You are thinking of last year's fevers, Vives, when the Bishop accused us of poisoning the wells and Daniel's sons were stoned."

"And Elias' wife was. . ." The two walked on toward the market in silence, weaving between the Christians who brushed them aside or swerved to avoid them. "The comte feeds that preacher, Rabbi — he keeps him here to turn their people against us. . . You know that he owes me money?"

"I had heard it. How much does he owe you?"

"Eleven months ago he asked for two thousand livre. He made an oath to repay that sum with interest within three months. I had to borrow from others to find that money, but he has not repaid it. I have let the others down, and endangered our people."

"The King fights the English, and raises the money from his vassals." The rabbi stopped still and looked gravely at the moneylender. "The comte cannot have three thousand livre — that is what he owes, by now? — and the loan was made foolishly and you have certainly put us all in danger. If you want my sympathy you are disappointed."

"Rabbi, you speak with the Bishop, and your cousin. . ."

"The Bishop debates the Prophets with me — but always on his terms — and perhaps he hates us as much as that friar. Their Pope uses my cousin as a servant, not an ally." He looked up suddenly, taking half a step backward, and Vives wheeled to see what startled him.

"Vives the Usurer." A gaunt knight stepped toward him swiftly, loathing in his eyes and four men-at-arms at his back. "The comte has ordered that you come with us immediately, Jew."



Gerbert had not looked at the judge at all, but had kept his face turned downward, his eyes fixed on his feet. He hoped that a show of humility and repentance might move the judge to mercy, as it had been his first offence. But the merchant's purse had been heavy with silver, and the judge was inclined to prove that the town would protect wealthy foreigners.

A priest had been sent to him in his cell, to take his confession, and had got his life story along with it. Gerbert was grateful that the Church cared even for a sinner like himself, and he later sat in the dark and prayed to the Blessed Virgin. He begged for forgiveness, and thanked Heaven that he had no family to grieve or worry for him.

Morning came slowly and unwelcome. (*Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. . .*) Sounds from the street drifted over the castle wall and whispered through the window, chiding him. A child playing at stilt-walking toppled over and cried for its mother; a pedlar shouted, praising his pasties and pies; a crier with a handbell announced a forthcoming execution. (*. . . Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.*) A church bell sounded, calling the sinful and the saintly to Mass, and for the first time in many years Gerbert wanted desperately to attend.

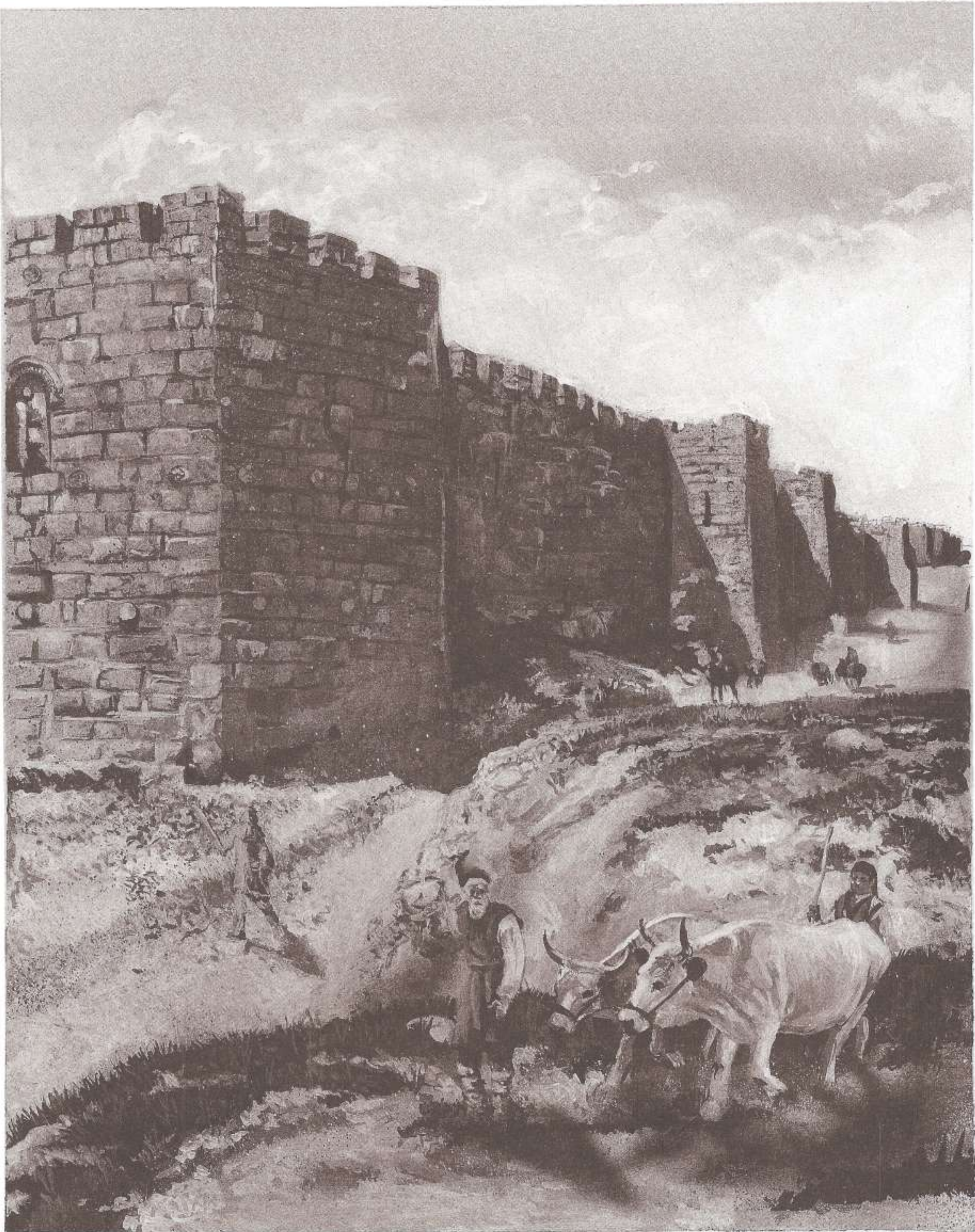
Iron bolts crashed back and the prison door was flung wide. The morning sun cut into his eyes as he was pushed into the courtyard, now naked, his hands tied behind him. Out through the gates he saw groups of people waiting to see who the victim was to be, and Gerbert prayed it would not be painful. (*Hail Mary, full of grace. . .*) In the street, men and women paused in their business to watch, or hurried away (*. . . the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou amongst women. . .*) and groups of children leered and pointed (*. . . and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus*).

Up on the scaffold, the noose around Gerbert's neck, one of the town council read out the particulars of his conviction, the carpenter checked the pulley, and three laborers took grip on the rope. (*Hail Mary full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou amongst women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.*)

The councillor signalled, the laborers pulled, and the noose jarred upward and tightened. Gerbert's feet left the scaffold. Beneath him some cheered, some gasped, others turned their backs. Seconds became minutes. His eyes felt as if they would burst, his neck strained and his bowel loosened. Some of the children turned to bury their faces in their mothers' bellies, while others stood agape. He struggled vainly, his legs thrashing, and he could not scream. Fleeting images fled before him, thoughts of purgatory, of God's mercy, and of his mother.

*Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.*







When a penitent sinner confesses his or her guilt to an ordained member of the holy mother Church — whether he be a secular or monastic priest — the cleric is obliged to absolve the sinner, but also to impose a penance which fits the sin. A sinner who does not then carry out the penance is not truly repentant and is not absolved of the sin.

The most common penance is a fast, which typically requires the penitent to abstain from all meat or any other produce of an animal (such as eggs and cheese), but leaves them free to eat fish. In all respects this fast is the same as that which all pious folk are exhorted to uphold during the forty days of Lent. Other penitents might be required to undertake a pilgrimage, pray for a certain length of time, recite the invocation "Hail Mary" a certain number of times, or undertake an all-night vigil of prayer and contemplation.

Venial (minor) sins need not be confessed, and no penance should be given for those pious enough to do so. Venial sins, by definition, are trivial acts and wrongdoings which were not deliberately committed. Mortal sins, by contrast, are those which are committed deliberately and which are significant enough to endanger a person's soul. Examples of mortal sins, and appropriate penances, are offered below.

Any woman who terminates her own pregnancy — through herbs or physical molestation — should fast for at least one year. If the pregnancy had already lasted for more than six weeks she shall be held guilty of murder and must commit penances suitable to that hideous sin. If magical incantations are involved, a further three years' fasting is required.

Any man who fornicates with a woman who is not his wife must fast for at least one week, or considerably longer if the woman was herself married, or if the affair was incestuous. Three years penance is reasonable for a prolonged affair. The woman shall fast for at least twice as long as the man, for women, temptresses by nature, are inevitably more responsible for such lecheries.

A man who forges legal documents, or falsifies or devalues currency, shall abstain on bread and water for the rest of his life.

A thief shall fast for at least one year (for the most trivial offence), and for the theft of large sums shall abstain upon bread and water as long as he shall live.



A man who kills another in anger shall fast for one year. A soldier who kills in the course of a just war shall make a pilgrimage to some local shrine. Premeditated murder requires a lengthy fast, and a man who willfully murders his wife or father must undertake a pilgrimage to Jerusalem or Rome with only a single pair of shoes or else fast for the rest of his days.

The practice of magic also requires harsh penance. Anyone who conspires to cause murder or raise a storm or destroy buildings through sorcery must subsist for three years on bread and water alone, and for four years thereafter must abstain from eating any red meat. One who uses so-called love-magics must fast for at least three months (if the victim was the sinner's husband or wife) or five years (if the offender was a priest or other cleric).

Any penance may be commuted into a donation, made to any cathedral or abbey, and the monetary value of each penance is decided by the bishops and abbots. Other forms of "commutation" are also possible. Clerics and others who know the psalms might substitute the recital of fifty psalms in place of one day's fast. Laymen, who do not know the psalms, may give alms to the poor (equivalent in value to the amount they might have given to the Church in commutation for the same sin).



# THE THIRD JOURNEY

## CHAPTER SEVEN

This final excursion began six days before Easter, in the year of Our Lord eleven hundred and ninety six. Our esteemed abbot was absent, visiting his brother the baron for several days, and Prior Gerald glowed with satisfaction as he presided over the morning's meeting in the chapter house.

After the day's regular business was concluded, the prior became more sombre. Grave news had been sent of Brother Arnall, absent on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. He had succumbed to a severe fever and had died. The prior enumerated the deceased brother's qualities, and announced that a Mass would be sung for his soul later that morning, between Terce and Sext. We crossed ourselves and shuffled nervously, reminded again of our own human frailty, but the prior seemed to have more to say.

Brother Arnall, it seemed, had collected a number of potent relics in the Holy Land, and these rested at a castle. Not wishing to trust their care to greedy merchants and sailors, nor longer than needs be to the Baron de Saone, the prior decided to have them recovered. One of the brothers must go, he said, to be accompanied by a novice, and by a local medicus — a physician who ironically had meant to make pilgrimage with Brother Arnall, but had been detained by the lingering illness of a local noblewoman. I turned my face to the floor, but there was no real question of which brother would go.

The abbot doubtless would have been more prudent than to risk two further members of our community, and when we returned he was clearly displeased that the journey had been so expensive.

However, I was to leave immediately after the lost brother's Mass. Unkind tongues whispered that the prior wished me gone before the abbot could return and countermand his orders. Taking him one step nearer to a bishop's mitre, these relics would be secured by his command, whatever the cost to the abbey.

### Sigimund of Speyer

After the Mass, I collected my few things — bowl, knife, spoon and spare habit — and sought out my companions. The novice, Linde, was still at prayer in the church, anxious and excited at once. Sigimund the physician stood speaking to the prior by the stables. I immediately embarrassed myself, stifling a smile at the sight of his long tunic — almost a gown, and clearly intended to mark him out as a scholar of some type. Still, I greeted him as a medicus, and was told firmly that he was not a "common hedge-healer," but a "physicus," a man of learning.

Having been presented with a pack-mule, a heavy pouch of coins and numerous letters of introduction, we set off into the valley, and I apologized for my unwitting rudeness. Sigimund explained that, in proper usage, a medicus might be any fool who professed an ability to practice medicine. That title would apparently include any village wise-woman and unlettered herbalist, while a physicus supposedly was a man of learning, literate, conversant in Latin and natural philosophy, having read various medical treatises and perhaps with an understand of astrology. Although he had not attended the great schools of





Bologna or Montpellier, Sigimund clearly counted himself as a *physicus*, and I must confess that his fluent Latin put me to shame.

But was not a *physicus*, surely, one who practiced *physica*, healing of the inner body? Evidently not, according to Sigimund. However, I have since heard many people use the term to mean just this, although none of them, admittedly, were themselves medical practitioners.

Hoping to make amends for my rudeness, and being rather curious, I asked Sigimund about his work: how he knew what was wrong with a man, and how he could cure it. He began to explain that all illness results from an imbalance of four humors in the human body (phlegm, blood, choler and melancholy), brought about by bad air, diet or the positions of the planets. Discerning illness was apparently based upon observing obvious symptoms, the color of urine, the clotting of blood and several other techniques. Each individual, he said, had a unique "complexion" (at this point I became rather confused), and somehow diet, medication and surgery may be employed to facilitate a return to the natural "balance." He sensed, at this point, that I was not following him, and he stopped. Surely my lot in life was to praise God and wonder at his Mysteries, rather than to seek after His secrets.

The noon was clear and none too cold, though peasants in the fields strained to break the hard and icy ground. In the fields already harrowed, thin horses pulled ploughs or young men sowed. In most, beans and spring grains were already sown, and children drove scavenging birds from the seed with stones and slings. Amongst the flocks on the hillside, some sheep had already been shorn by shepherds eager to get high prices at the earliest markets.

Yet the sight of the farmers and shepherds made me somewhat irritated. Seeing these folk busy with the tasks which God had allocated them, I was reminded that my vocation lay in the cloisters and chapels of our monastery, not on the roads of the empire and beyond. Still, as I had pledged to serve God I was obliged to obey the prior, and I silently reprimanded myself for my disobedience. It is the sin of Pride to criticize one's rightful superiors, and I am often too lax in my guard against it.

## To Zurich

As the first evening approached, Sigimund brought up the question of where we were to spend the night. I had naturally thought to inquire as to the locations of monasteries which lay along our route, and I enumerated the next few up the road. Naturally, we would find a place in their dormitories.

Sigimund, however, was unimpressed by the thought of a pallet in a common room, and sensibly observed that since some of these houses lay a mile or more from the road, we would travel more swiftly if we took a room in an inn. Furthermore, he said, he made a living in the service of lords



north of the Alps, and if detours were to be made he could most likely find more comfortable accommodation in the barons' castles.

If we were to spend a night in a tavern, I ventured, we would sleep in the common room, on the floor, in order to save money. Sigimund was quite upset by this prospect, but did point out that we both carried some weight of silver in our purses and that inns on trade routes are not always without robbers.

Eventually a compromise was reached. We would not deviate more than a mile from the road, and if we spent a night at an inn, we would take a room. The first two nights we were fortunate enough to find lodgings in religious houses, the first night in an austere Cistercian monastery, and the second in a homely Augustine community.

The first night we shared a room with an itinerant monk and a traveling lord's retinue, and were woken twice by the bells for Matins and Lauds. A stern brother came into the dormitory to ensure that none should miss these holy offices, and come the morning Sigimund not only refused to rise for breakfast but also required the attention of two brothers to ensure his punctual attendance at Prime. We left that abbey somewhat delayed, as Sigimund insisted that the lay brothers in the kitchen should heat some porridge for his belated breakfast. He then became quite irate when they refused to add honey to sweeten it.

The Augustinian community was reached only after dusk, though they graciously made us as comfortable as they could and never mentioned that we were delaying their sleep. I was gently shaken awake for the offices, and apologized that after my journey I had failed to wake myself as usual, but Sigimund was left to sleep through the night — which much improved his humor at the expense of God's greater glory.

The third night, however, we stayed at a small inn, perhaps fifteen miles from Zürich. I can honestly recommend to any brother that, when carrying any coin or objects of worth, sole use of a private room should be secured despite the expense — although away from trade-routes few inns have such facilities — as I felt so much safer within that room than if I had been sleeping in a shared room. There was no worry about the honesty of one's roommates, the windows stood ten feet above the yard below and were heavily shuttered, and the door's latch could be jammed fast to exclude unwanted visitors. A large wooden-framed bed filled much of the room, taut rope supporting a straw mattress, and a smaller frame and mattress stored beneath it. The smaller we slid out for Linde to sleep on, whilst Sigimund and I each took one-half of the main bed.

We gathered good news of the roads the following evening, as a poor merchant lodged at the same inn as we did, staying in the stables with his mules. That evening he told us that the Saint Gottard Pass to Milano was usable, although some deep banks of snow lingered on its higher reaches, and would do so until late August. Indeed, the pass had been open for several weeks, and I prayed that no new

snows would block the way and leave us stranded. Moreover, there had been no word of brigands in the pass, and so it seemed that God smiled upon.

## Zurich

We broke our journey for five days in Zürich, in order to properly celebrate Easter, and found our own accommodation according to our stations. Myself and Linde looked to the cathedral canons, who generously found us a cell, whilst Sigimund sought out a physician whom he may once have met before, and prevailed upon his hospitality.

Zürich is itself an unremarkable city, a market grown huge simply because it stands on a busy trade route. The cathedral, likewise, is typical of many in northern Europe, quite unlike the awesome structures which may be seen in Venice, Constantinople or Rome. It is simply a large, dark husk, punctuated occasionally by grey statues, garish altarscreens and isolated instances of gold-leaf. Only when animated by the wonder of sincere worship did the dismal place become glorious. And that Easter, with the agony of the Friday and the sheer joy of the Monday, I believe that in that cathedral I understood the mystery of our salvation more deeply than ever before.

If any brother should ever have the chance, I strongly recommend that he attend an Easter Day Mass in a great cathedral. The general public fill the body of the building, and as a monk one has a preferential position near the altar, without being involved in the ceremony. One truly feels a part of the great body of mankind receiving Christ's sacrifice. Further, the choir is more specially selected and practiced than in monastic communities, and their heavenly voices lend unfamiliar surroundings an otherworldly aspect.

The priests entered in procession, glittering in gold and palled in the heavy scent of incense. The cross and censer — both gilt- and jewel-encrusted — sparkled in the candle light, and the congregation felt the Holy Water sprinkled across them like Christ's tears. Then the Kyrie and other chants were sung, as in our own communities, but with the angelic beauty of a well-rehearsed choir. The prayers and biblical readings also gained a new resonance in such elevated surroundings. As the Blood and Body of Christ were consecrated, and the handbells were rung three times, one heard in each tolling a day spent by Christ in the pits of hell — made almost tangible in the shadowed recesses of such a cathedral.

There was some coming and going amongst the public, of course, but less than may be imagined, considering that not knowing Latin they must have understood little of the ceremony — and not all have the patience to wait nearly two hours to receive the Body and Blood.

Some commoners, of course, attend with a quite ignorant faith, but I do not believe that they could be quite unmoved by such a ceremony. It is also true that a few people rarely attend Church but for their baptism, marriage



and funeral. Fortunately, a cathedral Mass is rarely marred by men of doubtful piety, since they are more likely to attend a local church, of which dozens grace every large city.

In any case, a Mass is not for the education or pleasure of the common man, but for the glory of God.

## To Milano

The journey through Saint Gottard Pass took much longer than I expected. Some days we walked for miles along paths which constantly snaked and turned back on themselves, so finishing the day within sight of our previous night's lodgings. In one instance we had to walk some twelve miles to find a ford across a swollen stream, and then another twelve to rejoin the pass, so that in two days we had traveled, in real terms, no more than a few hundred paces.

We were also hampered by the merchants whom we traveled with, Swiss folk in the pay of the Milanese, whose draught animals progressed slowly. Still, there was no option for us but to join a larger group through the pass, since two *religiosi* and a physician would have been helpless in the face of any crisis — be it an accident or an ambush. In the end, we suffered no great hardship, but for a late blizzard which marooned us in a village near the top of the pass. I led some of the men and villagers in prayer, and at the end of a week the Lord saw to it that the snows ceased.

The descent toward Milano was easier than the ascent. We arrived there about a month after Easter, and continued immediately toward Genoa. But on our last night before reaching that city, as we prevailed upon a large monastery for our lodgings, I at last had an insight into Sigimund's learning.

## The Abbot Gherardo

We had arrived at the monastery late in the day, and the Hospitaller had advised us that the abbot, who was unwell, should not be troubled until morning, when common courtesy dictated that we should present ourselves to him. Sigimund slept through Matins and Lauds, but at Prime noted that the abbot was not conducting the office himself, and as the monks filed out he sought the infirmarer. This aged monk informed us that the abbot was suffering from the disease called "catarrh," which now threatened to become a fever.

Leaving Linde to elevate his mind by participating in the Mass following Prime, I followed Sigimund to the abbot's chambers. He explained, on the way, that "catarrh" resulted from an excess of phlegm, and like any illness might indeed transform into a more dangerous affliction if untreated.

The abbot greeted us cordially, although he seemed somewhat pale to my unskilled eye, and after exchanging pleasantries Sigimund explained that he was a physicus, and asked whether the abbot could use his services. The abbot

proposed a "moderate" fee as compensation (although it seemed a vast sum for a few minutes' consultation), and they began to discuss his ailment.

In brief, his predicament was thus: Three months ago, postponing his regular bloodletting, the catarrh had begun in his chest. The infirmarer had advised — as two medici from Milano had confirmed — that bloodletting during an attack of catarrh might damage his voice, which, given his rank and vocation, would be disastrous. However, the abbot feared that an excess of blood was building, so that he might soon develop a fever; he was already suffering from headaches and occasional hoarseness. The infirmarer and medici had prescribed medicines — cumin, hyssop, figs in syrup, and licorice, I believe — but they had proved ineffective. What should he do?

Sigimund tactfully requested a sample of urine, confirmed that bloodletting should be postponed, and measured the rhythm of the abbot's pulse. They discussed medication and an ancient Greek called "Galen" — the abbot clearly having some theoretical if not practical knowledge of medicine — and at length Sigimund examined the scent and color of the urine. His methods remaining a mystery to me, Sigimund eventually confirmed the original medications (tactfully sidestepping the abbot's protests that they were "too wet" to treat phlegm), plus several others involving more obscure ingredients. He also prescribed "potential cautery" for the headaches (by which the infirmarer would apply heated metal cups to the abbot's head), a regime of hot baths, steam inhalation and medicated gargles.

The abbot was reluctantly grateful for the advice, and gave instructions to the cellarer that Sigimund should be paid. After this audience, Sigimund sought out the infirmarer again, informing him of the new treatments and answering questions concerning the origins and availability of the new medicines. I found Linde in the cloisters, and somewhat delayed, we continued to Milano, which we reached with ease before the gates closed at dusk.

## To Genoa

The remainder of the journey was as uneventful as one would expect, surrounding cities not actively pursuing their feuds, and the countryside cloaked in a bleary tranquility. The spring beans had been planted, and the people settled down to less urgent tasks of craft and maintenance, or sat on the hillsides watching their goats. Only on the roads were people eager and brisk, merchants shuttling goods back and forth amongst themselves.

In Genoa, where so many exotic, eastern goods are landed, the bustle was all the more intense. Even those who did not seem hurried wore expressions of concern or anticipation. Sigimund commented upon the vitality of the place, and, knowing myself to be so much less lettered than he, I did not feel inclined to debate its merits.



My sole concerns were to find lodgings — weakly allowing Sigimund to find us a cramped room in a narrow inn, rather than heading for a religious community outside the city walls — and then to find us a ship. As soon as dawn broke, I woke Sigimund and Linde, and headed for the docks.

## The Docks and the Voyage

The docks at Genoa were bustling places, filled with jostling crowds of porters, sailors and merchants, carpenters and boatwrights, pilgrims, travelers and other less easily identifiable fellows. Prudently, Sigimund suggested that we hold on to our purses in the crowds.

From the barns on the waterfront, burly porters brought sacks of grain and wool, barrels of wine and olive oil, and all manner of other goods, which they dragged along the docks on hand-carts or slung over their shoulders. With greater care the merchants supervised the carriage of their more expensive wares: well-wrapped bundles of spices and pepper, bolts of sumptuous cloth, fine skins, and parchments and pigments. The trade goods were carried across the docks to the edge of the sea, so that to walk the length of the front was a tortuous business, as we moved through the tides of men who flowed across our path.



Along the docks the shallow-drafted galleys waited to load, bound for Sicily, Barcelona or Provence. Broad barges took on cargoes for larger ships, which waited further out in the deeper waters of the harbor, bound for the East as we were. We spoke with many foremen and merchants' assistants, asking when their ships were departing and if they could take passengers. Eventually we came toward the end of the docks, where the stinking muck-boats took on the city's waste to fertilize the fields of smaller villages, but we were still no nearer to deciding which ship we might take.

Our choice was, in fact, made for us by a chance meeting — or by the grace of God — for as we walked back along the front we were approached by a smiling young soldier, wearing the splayed cross of the Knights Hospitaller. Sigimund returned his warm smile and the two embraced each other with much shoulder slapping and exclamation.

The knight, Louis, was a Burgundian by birth, whom Sigimund had met six years before. The Burgundian owed his life to the physician, he said, as he had been half starved by constant vomiting which the German had cured with a course of medicines and such-like. He was in Genoa with a contingent of Hospitallers, having carried a batch of letters by Galley from the Holy Land, whence they now prepared to return.

Sigimund remarked that we, too, were bound for the Levant, and hearing that we had arranged no other passage, this Louis offered us a place on his own galley. We accepted gratefully, and he left to seek the approval of the galley's commander. Within an hour he had returned, and by noon we were on board the sleek, low warship.

The galley moved away from Genoa against the wind, scores of Moorish slaves chained beneath the deck pulling at the oars. Provisions were lashed to the deck, and the Hospitaller soldiers sat on crates or loitered on the raised castles at the stern and bow. By later afternoon we traveled with the wind at our side, so the oars were stowed and the sail hoisted.

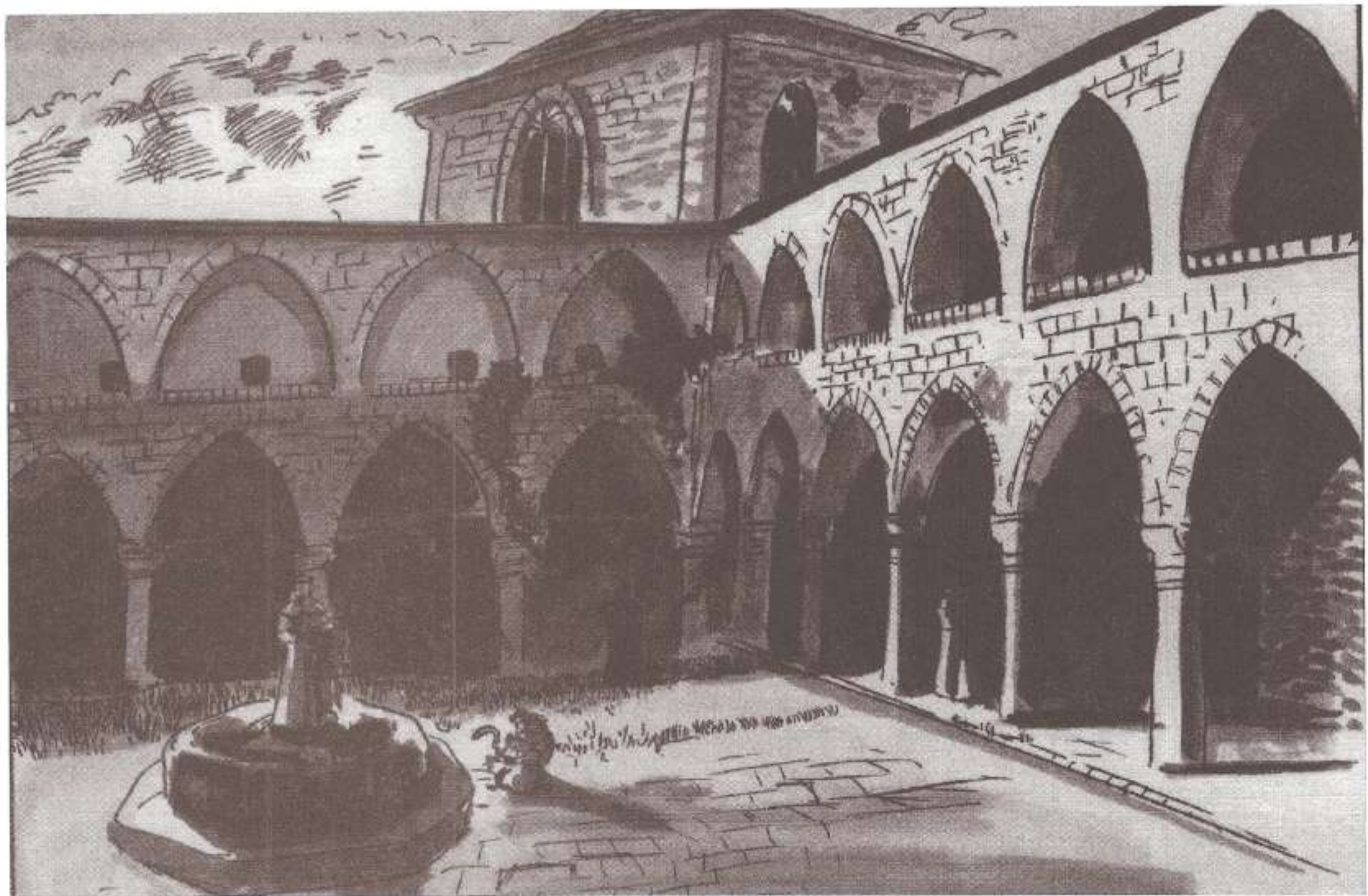
Weapons were kept at hand from force of habit rather than because any danger threatened, and although some practiced with their swords or crossbows, much of the time was spent in idle conversation, gaming or prayer. The Hospitallers, though fighting men, are monks nonetheless, and they observed the eight divine offices even at sea.

When the wind was low or against us the galley moved under the power of the oars, and when we could travel faster under sail, the slaves rested and the wind carried us along, the heavy ram at the bow slicing the water before us. At night we pulled up, to rest the slaves or to avoid collisions or running aground, or else moved further out to sea and proceeded more slowly.

## Salerno

It was necessary to pull in to port to take on supplies — particularly of drink, as each slave drank two gallons of water every day, and we each drank perhaps a gallon of





watered wine. Sigimund was delighted when it was announced that we would pause at Salerno, where the university had gained an outstanding reputation for the study of medicine.

My companion asked if he would have time to briefly go ashore, and the commander answered that it would be at least an hour before he had bought and loaded the provisions we needed. Sigimund immediately headed off into Salerno, graciously allowing me to accompany him. Near the cathedral we found the various colleges of the university, one run by the cathedral canons, another by the Augustinian Friars. There tonsured students milled about with books under their arms or shouted raucously from the taverns.

Sigimund approached one group of students and asked (in Latin) if there was anywhere in Salerno that books might be hired. They confirmed that one of the colleges hired key works — but only to its own students — and that a local scribe had also taken to hiring out books by the gathering.

We sought out this scribe, and in his workshop Sigimund asked after the medical texts which were available for hire, again speaking in Latin. The scribe produced a pile of unbound manuscripts, including tracts on surgery, medicinal astrology, observation of symptoms, fevers and medicines, along with portable manuals and urine color charts.

At length he picked out a text wherein an Italian physicus had distilled the wisdom of numerous Moors and ancient Greeks. Sigimund asked if the scribe would have a copy made, bound and illuminated for him. The scribe said the book was quite long and might take two months to complete, but Sigimund agreed and began to discuss a price.

I objected that we might not be returning to Salerno, and that if we did it would hopefully be in under two months. Sigimund retorted that he had no intention of letting such a learned book slip away from him — as he could never hope to find its equal in Germany — and that if he had to desert me in order to get the book he would do so. I will confess that I became rather angry, as he had given his word that he would accompany me to the Holy Land and back, and an argument ensued. But Sigimund could not be persuaded, and he concluded the agreement with the scribe and made a down-payment for the work.

## To the East

From Salerno we continued on once more, via Sicily and Cyprus to Acre. The journey was largely uneventful, although the soldiers became considerably more alert after we had entered the eastern Mediterranean.

The only real difficulty was encountered off Crete, where a sudden squall struck the ship one evening. This was no real storm by the standards of the Baltic or North Sea, but the ships of the Mediterranean are not built as solidly as



northern ships, and the galley pitched and groaned fearfully, spray crashing over the deck. Two of the soldiers were nearly pitched into the sea, one of the slaves was wounded by a chain which lashed across his face as a wave jarred the ship, and I will confess that I did not feel at all safe.

Indeed, the galley's commander did nothing for my spirits when he suggested that we three lash ourselves to the mast. Sigimund seemed to think this was to stop us from being washed into the sea, and I did not see any point in disillusioning him — though in fact the point of such a measure is to ensure that if the ship broke up we might still receive a proper burial, as the mast would be likely to wash ashore somewhere.

Still, we eventually reached Acre, the storm having claimed only one victim. Sigimund was neither asked nor offered to treat the injured heathen, and his gash festered, so that the commander ordered him unchained and hurled over the side.

## Acre

Approaching Acre, the first thing we saw was the castle of the Templars, on the tip of the peninsula. It was built in the western style, giving the impression that this was a simple piece of Christendom clinging to the Moorish lands, but as we came closer the whole town became visible, stark and alien. Rowing in through the harbor walls, we found the town to appear thoroughly Moorish; pale stone buildings with flat roofs lined dusty streets.

We walked through the town to the Hospitallers' huge, imposing headquarters, where we were found rooms, and were introduced to the headquarters' commander (the Grand Master being too great a man to trouble greeting a lowly monk and a physician). He welcomed us courteously, and asked if there was anything he might do for us.

I told him that we needed to reach the Castle de Saone, and might require directions or even transport in reaching it. He replied that the castle lay some way to the north, in the Principality of Antioch, across a great deal of Saracen territory, and that we would require a ship to get to the north and an armed escort from the coast. The castle had only recently been recaptured from the Moors, and the whole area was dangerously unstable. However, he generously offered to lend us both a ship and an escort, if we could afford to wait a fortnight. Having come thus far, such a delay hardly seemed important.

I asked if, in the meanwhile, Acre was safe to walk about. The commander smiled and replied that it was little more than a giant garrison, full of holy soldiers and all but without petty criminals.

So I took myself off to tour the town, though I found it a bizarre and rather intimidating place. Very many of the people on the streets were soldiers, and although I found no proper market place, there were at least six buildings which looked like castles. The cathedral was but half the size of the

Hospitallers' Church of Saint John, and the castle of the King's constable was dwarfed by the Hospitaller headquarters which overlooked it — even the headquarters of the Venetian merchants seemed a greater fortress than that of the King's constable.

## The Bishop's Feast

The following Sunday, we were approached by a cleric from the cathedral. He invited me, on the Deacon's behalf, to a meal that evening in the Bishop's palace. His Grace was not presently resident in Acre, he said, but in his absence the Deacon continued the tradition of holding a dinner for the pilgrims and soldiers who had arrived in the town the preceding week.

Of course we accepted the invitation, although Sigimund later scoffed that the Bishop just wanted to lure pilgrims away from Saint John's Church in order that the cathedral might receive their donations instead of the Hospitallers. For myself I would not doubt that the Bishop was merely exercising Christian charity toward pious pilgrims and crusaders.

The meal was a fairly moderate affair, with a dozen dishes being served (most rather oily for my palate), and without any entertainment. For all its military might, Acre was rather lacking in pleasing artifice.

Here we met with a number of pilgrims from Greece, Italy, France, Hungary and even Scotland, many of whom stayed at the pilgrims' hospice in Acre. Most were wealthy folk — such as might afford to leave their business or responsibilities for six months or a year — but there was also a shoemaker and a retired soldier.

The main topic of conversation between them was whether or not the road to Jerusalem was passable. In 1192 the English King Richard had made the Saracens agree to let pilgrims pass to Jerusalem. But since then, access had been effectively severed, much to the distress of such pilgrims as these, who had come from distant lands to visit the Holy Sepulchre where Christ was entombed. Not only Jerusalem, but many other holy places had been taken by the heathens, including the tomb of John the Baptist, the site of the Ascension, Bethlehem, Tiberias and Capernaum.

It is a tragedy that such sites cannot be retaken from the Moors, so that pious Christians might visit them, and I shared my lament with two Templars who sat nearby.

## Sir Ludheri

Sitting to my right at the reception was a knight named Ludheri, a pilgrim from Burgundy. He expected to inherit his father's manor, but like many nobles found that the old man — who was now at least fifty — continued in excellent health, and was with little to do. Ludheri was over thirty years old, and he had no desire to become a servant in a magnate's household; having few weapons and little skill at



arms, he felt unsuited to tournaments and Crusading; and so he had taken to traveling around Christendom, visiting shrines and holy places.

He has already made the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela. He had also visited such sites as Mont Saint Michel in Normandy, and even Saint Patrick's Purgatory in Ireland (where pilgrims are said to have visions of Purgatory if they spend a night in the cave, although Ludheri was sad to say that he had merely suffered from unsettled dreams). He had crossed the Alps on pilgrimage to the Seven Churches of Rome, and had now come all the way to the Holy Land. Clearly his father must have been very generous to have paid for all of these journeys.

As well as the holy shrines of Christendom, the knight also knew many monasteries and castles where he had stopped on his journeys, and spoke of their food and lodgings as a huntsman discusses hawks and horses. He had also become an authority on the wines and beers of northern Christendom, and spoke admiringly of the Provençal troubadours, which all led me to wonder about the real purpose of his journeys.

Although I would not presume to judge my fellow man, I did reflect that his pilgrimages were not as pious as they might have been, and perhaps boredom was unsuitable motivation for such journeys.

## Christ's Table

Two days after the Bishop's banquet, I was approached by the two Templars whom I had spoken with that evening. They said they had spoken with an elder knight, and mentioned my distress at being unable to view any of the great relics or shrines. Would I be interested in visiting Christ's Table, upon which the Last Supper was celebrated?

I was aghast. I had heard that Christ's Table had been lost to the heathens. Had it not been destroyed? Apparently it had survived, and the Church of Saint Peter's where it rested had been converted into a Saracen "Mosque." It would be easy enough — though not without risk — to cross into the Saracen lands and see the holy relic.

So that very night I spent at a stronghold of the Teutonic Knights, near to the heathens' lands. Sigimund told me he thought I was demented, to risk death to look at a table, and I felt I could not put Linde at risk by taking him with me.

Three hours before dawn we rose and took the horses which stood waiting for us. I was unused to riding, and was still sore from the previous day's journey, but we fortunately walked the horses until dawn.

Two Templar knights walked before me, one whom I knew with a crossbow, the other a much older man with just a sword. A black-clad sergeant walked at the rear. We traveled along the lush valleys, avoiding both the arid, exposed uplands and the roads. The journey had a surreal

quality to it — that we penetrated heathen territory as an armed group simply so an insignificant German monk might look at a holy relic in a temple of idolaters.

Before the sun had even cleared the horizon, we stood looking down at Lake Tiberias, on the north edge of which stood the little church of Saint Peter's — now desecrated and transformed into a "mosque."

I wondered how we would approach the place, whether it would be guarded and how the Templars planned to gain me access to it. Perhaps we would have to sneak in or charge down and capture the Moors. But the Templars simply mounted their horses and moved down to the road at a leisurely walk. By the church there was a small stone house. The older Templar simply dismounted and knocked at the door, which presently opened.

I had never before seen a Saracen, and do not know what I expected. I thought perhaps they were all tall and black skinned. Horns would not have surprised me. But this was just a short, tanned man in a loose robe, who smiled uneasily at the Templar and began an easy conversation in his heathen Arabic tongue.

After a brief exchange, the Saracen smiled, nodded and walked across to the church. There he took off his shoes before entering and motioned that we should do the same. I saw no reason to comply, but when the Templars did I followed their example.

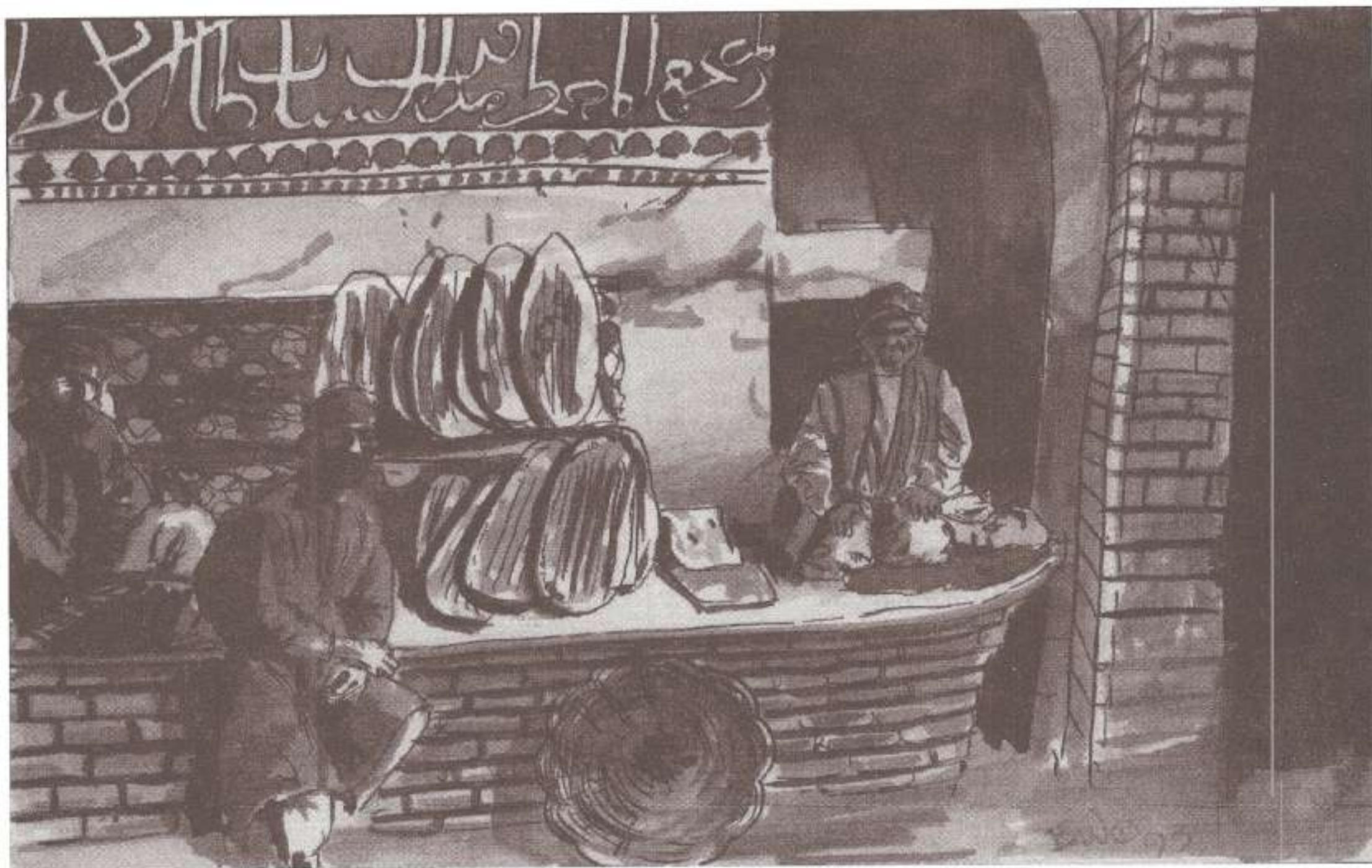
And there, in the crypt of the church, was the greatest complete relic that I have ever seen. Just a wooden table, but of unparalleled significance. The Templars withdrew, saying that they had seen it before, and I was left alone to marvel at it. I knelt in homage for hours. Still I could not pray. It seemed wrong, somehow, to praise God when I knelt in a desecrated church. The table should never have fallen into Saracen hands, and I was filled with a great sense that we — meaning all of Christendom — have failed in our duty to our Lord.

At length I left the "mosque" and came out into the dazzling sunlight. There before the church sat two dusky horsemen, armed and armored. I stood startled for a moment, thinking they would surely kill us — torture us to death, or maybe even offer us in sacrifice to their heathen idols. But then I realized that they were talking quite reasonably in Arabic to the Templars, who stood out of swords' reach exchanging pleasantries — and even jokes, it seemed — with these murderers of good Christians.

Seeing that I had joined them, the Templars introduced me, and the Moors bowed slightly to me (in truth the devil's agents are wily folk) — and instinctively I bowed back, though I wish that I hadn't.

The Templars immediately mounted their horses, led mine across to me, and we started back toward Acre — but one of the Saracens accompanied us. The Templars seemed quite relaxed about this (though they kept an eye on him), but I was terrified. I expected him to attack, to lead us into an ambush, to summon his friends, or some such, but in fact





he just rode along with us until we reached the edge of the Saracen territory and then turned eastward toward his home.

Why did the Templars not capture him — or kill him? They just shrugged and said that it would have been shortsighted to have done so. I have heard many stories of Templars fighting heroically and dying as martyrs for Christ, but others say they are actually collaborators with the heathens.

## The Crusaders

As we rode I took the opportunity to ask my guides about the Crusades. Were the Western armies succeeding in recapturing the Holy Land for Christ? Their replies were ambivalent.

A few years before, the Moors had almost entirely overrun the area, and a Crusade led by the kings of France and England had prevented the collapse of the Kingdom of Jerusalem — although its capital city remained occupied by the Saracens. Slowly more land was being won back, but there was no prospect of outright victory over the heathens or the recapture of Jerusalem.

The Crusaders, they said, flocked whenever the Pope called a Crusade, hoping to save their souls and make their fortunes at once. But, in truth, they arrived piece-meal, when it suited their squabbling leaders. Often the Crusaders had no idea about the climate, local etiquette or how to treat the Saracens (whatever that meant).

Otherwise, it sounded like any other war, dominated by long marches and longer sieges. Deaths amongst the Crusaders, they said, were as often caused by disease and dehydration as by battle, and many who died from their wounds did so unnecessarily.

They mentioned a number of fine physicians (one of whom was reputed to have found a knight with his guts hanging out of his middle, and with hot wine, cloths, needles and silk thread had restored the man to full health), but complained that most Crusaders benefited only from the attentions of barbers and quacks — men whose only remedies were to bathe a wound and bandage it or else to amputate. Local Frankish surgeons, they insisted, were universally better than those brought with the Crusaders — having had greater experience and the benefit of Arabic learning — but the Crusaders rarely trusted their council.

I must confess, I too would be loath to trust a physician who had learned his art from the books of blaspheming Saracens.

## Saone Castle

Until the Hospitallers could take us northward, we visited the shrines and churches around Acre. For Sigimund the trip was primarily a pilgrimage, traveling to Mount Carmel and the site of Saint Anne's home amongst other places, and seeing many wonderful relics in the churches.



Ten days later, we continued the journey to Saone, taking a small ship, accompanied by four Hospitaller brothers.

The wind was strong and our journey swift. We hugged the coast for most of the way, although when we passed coastal areas held by the Moors we pulled further out to sea. From the port of Saint Simeon we headed southeast to Saone, Linde and Sigimund slowing us somewhat as they did not know how to ride.

The castle itself was a massive fortification, spread over twelve acres of land. I counted some twenty large towers, plus innumerable smaller strongpoints. The interior was divided into four large courtyards which could be defended against one another, and there were sheer drops around the castle on three sides.

We entered across a wooden bridge, which spanned a fifty-foot trench gouged out of solid rock, and passed through three gatehouses before finally reaching the massive central keep. Our horses were led away, and we were given rooms in the keep.

We then presented ourselves to the Baron de Saone, although he spoke no Latin and my French is very basic. I congratulated him on his castle, and he replied that the heathens had defended it tenaciously, but at last they surrendered and were sold as slaves or executed. Asked how long I would stay, I replied that we planned to burden him only until the following morning. Brother Arnall's fate was

of concern to me, however. The Baron assured me that a physician had tried in vain to control his fever. The chaplain's prayers had not had any greater impact, but he had at least been properly buried.

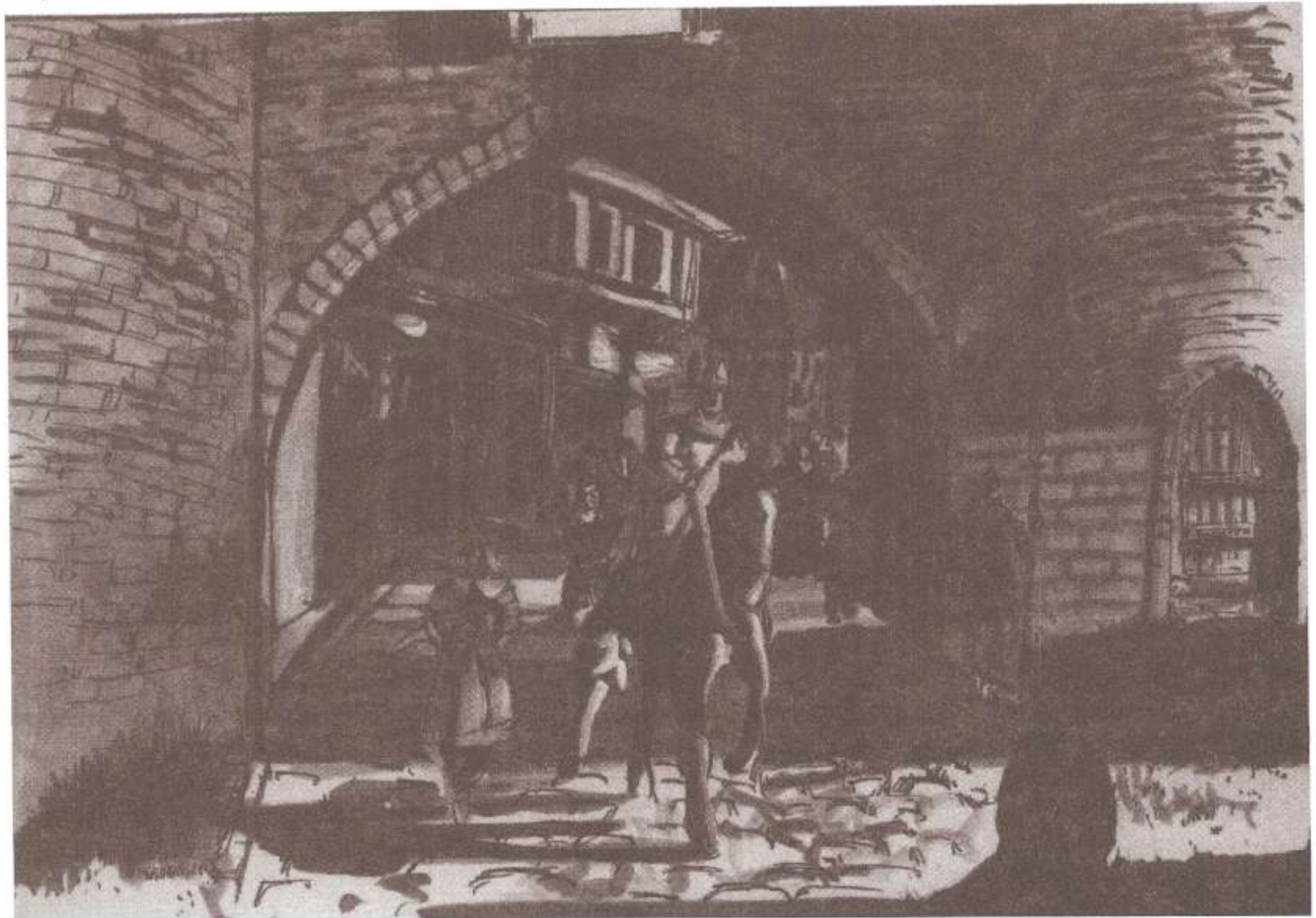
At last, I inquired after the relics, and the Baron said he would show them to me immediately after dinner. In the meantime, we were free to do as we pleased, so I led the Hospitallers in prayer and then sought out Sigimund.

Unsurprisingly, I found my companion engrossed in conversation with the Baron's physician, Balian.

## Balian's Studies

The physician seemed delighted to talk with Sigimund, and I listened in the vain hope that I might learn something more about the science of medicine. As the conversation progressed, however, it became clear that Balian was more than just a physicus, for he often read the stars for his baron and maintained an alchemical laboratory. Curious, I asked this strange physician about both alchemy and astrology, two sciences which I had no understanding of.

Alchemy, he explained briefly, is the science of discovering the means by which one thing can be changed into another, which in practical terms tends to mean turning base into precious things — lead into gold, for example. Balian explained that all matter had once been of the same substance, and had "adapted" into its many present forms.







An alchemist who cracked the secret of this adaptation, he said, would have power to transmute one thing into another, to heal all ailments and to literally make a vast fortune. I will confess that the whole idea sounded potentially blasphemous.

He spoke in vague terms about such things as "distillation," "calcination," "elixirs," "alkalis," and "naphtha," but gave little indication of what these things were or how they should be used or created. He talked of the ways in which "false gold" can be distinguished from the true mineral (heating it in a furnace seemed the simplest test), and how each metal is tied to a certain planet. He also talked of the need to maintain large laboratories, to hire assistants and miners to do dirty manual work, and of the need of the alchemist to avoid sin and places where sins have been practiced — yet in all this he actually told me nothing of any real substance.

Perhaps he feared that I would steal his secrets if he entrusted them to me, which I found rather irritating. Still, I have heard of monks as well as lay men dabbling in alchemy, and I am sure I should not be so proud as to resent Balian's prudence.

Astrology he was prepared to speak more freely of. There was, after all, no reason for him to hide such information, as it is already widely known. Any university-educated man will have at least a basic understanding of the spheres, and many monasteries have books on the subject.

The positions of each star, he said, predicted earthly events, depending upon where in the heavens they lay. The heavens, he explained, have twelve "houses" — six visible in the sky, and six hidden beneath the earth. Pertaining to individual humans, each star and each "house" has a particular meaning, so that when a person is born it may be possible to calculate how the person's life will unfold.

The first house predicts a person's personality, the second wealth or poverty, the third the person's family life, and so on. Each planet also has a particular meaning, such as Venus suggesting passion or lechery, and Jupiter indicating good fortune. For example, Balian told me that the tenth house predicts a person's career, so if at a man's birth Mars is in the tenth house, he is likely to be a soldier, but if Mars is in the eighth house it might foretell a violent death.

The constellations of fixed stars are also important, he said, and their position relative to the sun determines their general "sign," which is supposedly important for making further predictions. He then went on to talk about the importance of the moon, and explained how astrology might determine good or bad days to start journeys, to engage in battle and to marry, and might answer particular questions — but by that stage he had lost me completely.

Recently, he said, his lord had asked him to calculate whether or not the Moors would be likely to retake the castle, and after many hours' calculations he had determined that they would not.



Somewhat worried, I asked him whether he believed the stars to predict worldly events or actually influence them, and he assured me that they could not influence humanity in any way that would interfere with our free will. Perhaps he only replied thus because, seeing that I was a monk, he might have been afraid to betray heretical beliefs. Certainly men who have claimed that the stars influence our actions have been burned for blasphemy.

## The Relics

After a somewhat Spartan meal, the Baron took us to a locked room beneath his keep. There I saw the relics which Brother Arnall had collected before his unfortunate demise.

There was a bag of the stones which had been used to martyr Saint Stephen, a lock of hair from the head of Saint James the Apostle, and a battered sword-belt which had belonged to Saint George.

I asked how the brother had come by these things. The Baron said he had heard only rumors. The hair, he said, had been held at a Greek church near Tripoli, and he had no idea how the brother had persuaded the priest to give it up. Some folk said he stole it, but I am sure he could not have done such a thing. The stones, he said had been hidden in a cave, and were rumored to have been guarded by a demon. The belt he knew nothing of.

## Acre Once More

The following morning I approached the Baron once more, thanked him sincerely for safeguarding the relics and for his hospitality, and asked his permission to leave his castle — a nicety which is not always a formality in time of war. He gave his permission and wished us all God's speed. We rode out an hour after dawn to return to the coast.

The boat had other business further north, and then crossed over to Cyprus to deliver a message of some sort, so that our return to Acre took several days.

Here, amidst the soldiers and castles, we immediately set about finding a ship to take us back to Italy. The Holy Land is a place where every church and dwelling seems a miniature castle, and I did not care for it at all.

A Venetian merchantman suited our purposes, and so two days after our return we were rowed out to the ship's mooring by the harbor wall. As the last of its silks and spices and olive oils were loaded on, we climbed on deck. We were shown to a corner of the hold, walled off by a blanket, where straw mattresses had been lain over sacks of nuts. Sigimund was not impressed by the quality of the accommodation, but we had more privacy than the common crewmen and paid very little for the passage — and I would have endured far worse to speed home toward Germany.

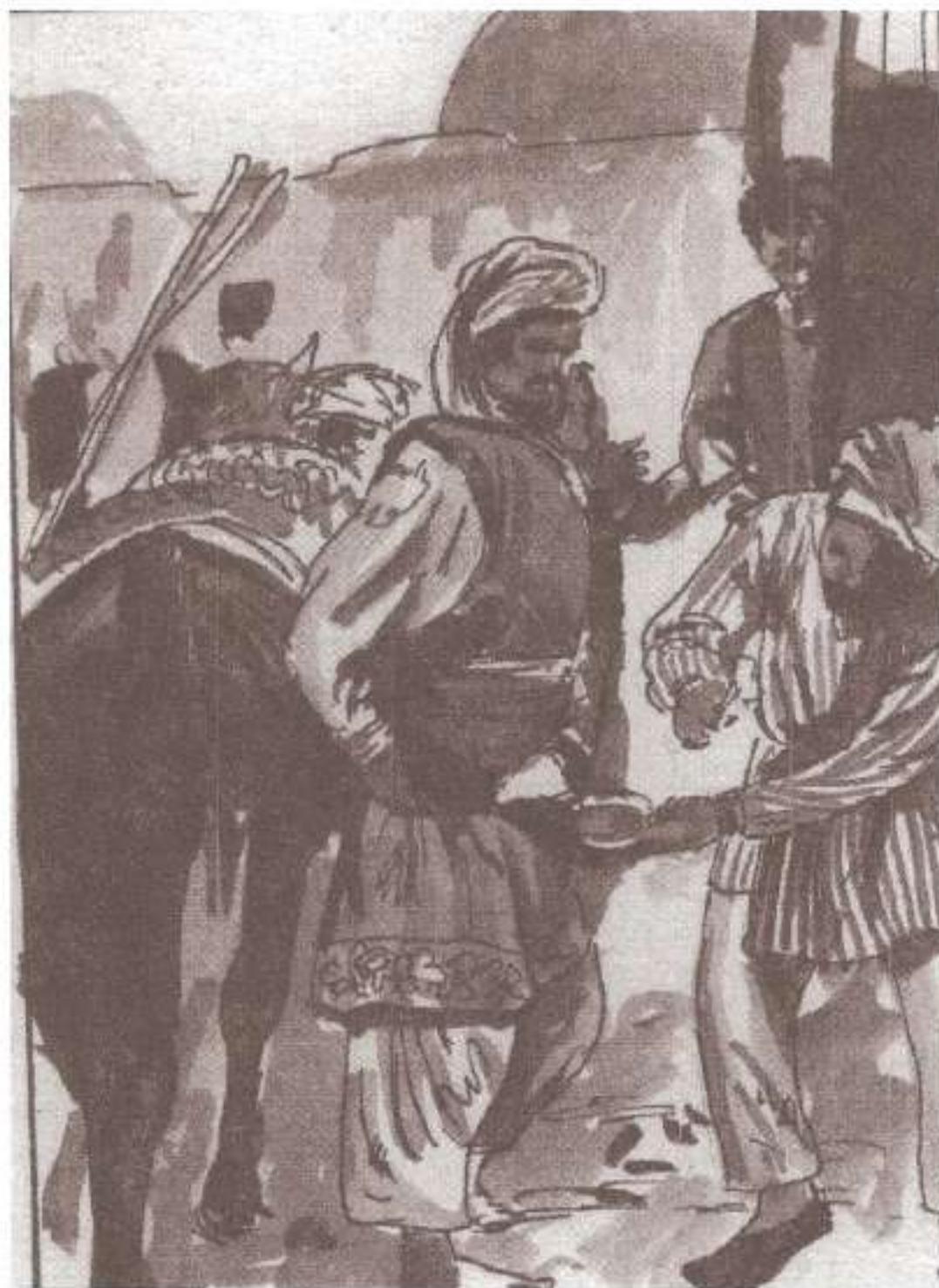
## Constantinople

Returning to Venice, our ship paused in Constantinople. Having heard much of its wealth and pomp, I thought to have a look around. Our captain warned me, however, that if I must go ashore I should stay to the main roads and avoid the dark alleyways.

I asked whether the city was a dangerous place, and he said that its darker quarters were full of murderers and thieves, whose crimes went unpunished. I asked if he knew his way around the city, and he said that he never went farther than the docks or houses of the great merchants, but had heard many stories from reliable witnesses. Unsure how exaggerated these tales were, I resolved to go ashore anyway.

Overall, there was a sense of decaying magnificence about the place. The wealthy built enormous stone houses, with tiled roofs and, in many cases, even glazed windows. The ancient "forums" and streets of the city were lined with columns and statues, and the vast Cathedral of Saint Sophia shone with gold and was filled with holy relics.

Still, where the houses clustered close together there were alleyways thrown into almost total darkness, and I could well imagine unspeakable crimes being committed in those dark passages. Beggars and paupers also thronged the streets, and many of the ancient monuments were beginning to crumble.





Like any great city, the place stank, and I noticed that there was little effort made to keep the streets clean. I have heard rumors of some great Roman system of water ducts beneath the city, but saw no sign of them here, and frankly find tales of sewers and such-like rather too fantastic to believe.

Constantinople was certainly a fabulous city, surpassed in wealth only by Venice, and its beauty was a startling contrast to Acre. Yet it had a grimmer, darker side to it as well, and I recall having heard somewhere that it is a city of vice in proportion to its wealth.

## Venice and Return

We were delayed in Piraeus (the port of Athens) for nearly a week when the wind turned against us and made it impossible to continue south or westward. Unlike the Hospitallers' galley, this merchantman could not afford the space nor money to keep oarsmen.

At length, however, we returned to Venice, where I parted company with Sigimund. I did not feel that I wished to go south again to Salerno, he refused to forsake his precious book, and by that time we had come to dislike each other for no very good reason. I pray God will forgive me that vanity.

So I took Linde and we crossed the Alps once again, returning home with the relics which Brother Arnall had gathered, may God have mercy on his soul.



The Templars stood in a cluster in the corner of the room, exchanging disparaging remarks and glancing contemptuously toward the Crusaders by the dais.

The French had come to the Holy Land in March, and after just four months had already decided to return. With the king had come a train of knights and other notables, eager to save their souls and make their fortunes, but quite discouraged by the difficulty of their endeavor. Amongst these French adventurers was the Baron d'Evaux.

The Baron had brought with him five knights and a score of soldiers, plus a chaplain, a scribe, and a number of domestic servants. Several of the soldiers were dead, from wounds, illness or the heat, and now his own cousin lay bedridden with an injured leg. Also, one of the serving girls had become demented.

"I blame the garlic, myself," one of the Templars muttered to his companions, "and the mustard."

"Perhaps it is the heat," another ventured.

"My lord d'Evaux," the former spoke aloud, and on the dais the young Baron looked up.

"Fra' Geoffry?" the Baron acknowledged him.

"Has your physician finished his examination?" The scrawny monk looked up from the woman he examined and nodded. "Then will he grace us with his. . . opinion."

The monk shuffled slightly and stood straight to face the Templars, daunted and angered at once. Geoffrey of Jenin was one of the Templars' finest physicians, known to read Arabic, supposed to be an expert in the use of herbs and said, by the credulous, to cure illness even with cheese-mold. And now this great, foolish man stood amongst his fellow knights and mocked the brother's pious learning.

"Sir Martin, the baron's cousin, suffers from a festering wound. Rather than heal properly, it has opened up and begun to exude puss. If the festering spreads, he will die. The servant, Mari, is possessed by a demon."

"Brother Simon," Geoffrey began condescendingly, "Sir Martin's wound had closed, but I applied a poultice which opened it again and brought the corruption out of his leg. The liquid, you will observe, is not the pale, fetid puss which causes death, but the thick white secretion which cleans the wound. In Montpellier and Bologna I believe they call it 'laudable puss.'"



"I'm no university doctor, Fra' Geoffrey. My skill is from the works of holy men, learned in my abbey."

"So have you not read the works of Rhazes or Hally Abbas? Or even Avicenna. . ."

"I do not look at heathen books, Fra' Geoffrey. I only read the holy scriptures and the works of good Christians."

Geoffrey was becoming irate. The ignorant monk accused him of being a poor Christian, when the authors he mentioned were read in universities and even monasteries across Christendom.

"Very well," he sighed, "You say the girl is possessed? When I came here I simply adjusted her diet, ensuring that she ate less garlic and mustard. Those foods are too hot, and with our climate they can unbalance the humors. Or do you say the demon lives on your French garlic?"

From the French a chorus of indignation arose, shouting against the Templar's jibe at their diet. The monk, meanwhile, turned from the Templars and began to speak with the wounded knight. As the shouts died away the brother spoke again, saying, "I have given Sir Martin the choice of living with one leg or dying with two, and he has chosen life. I will need a strong axe and a man to wield it."

The Templars muttered or gasped, and one of them laughed — which turned the French against them even further. Some walked out in protest or disgust, while a few, including Fra' Geoffrey, stayed behind to watch, and perhaps to gloat a little.

Four strong men held Sir Martin down as he repeated hurried Hail Marys, and a fifth swung the axe at Brother Simon's direction, hoping to sever the shin above the wound. The blow, however, struck askew, and the blade turned, ripping the flesh but not severing the limb. The knight screamed and writhed, and the spectators winced.

"Ah, Brother Simon?" the Baron asked timidly, "Are you certain. . .?"

"Yes, my lord, it is the only way." The monk answered with a hint of desperation. "Strike again."

The second blow landed heavy and straight, severing the limb so that blood and bone marrow spilled across the floor. Sir Martin buckled, but then was still.



Undaunted by the death of his first patient, the monk turned his attention to the serving girl. Geoffrey glared at the incompetent and vacillating baron, but his stare only served to harden the French against him.

Brother Simon had the servant tied firmly to a chair, her mouth gagged, her head restrained so that she could not move it, and taking a razor he shaved the hair from the crown of her head. Then he cut a cruciform incision in her scalp, and peeled the skin away. After scraping the remaining flesh from her skull he prepared to rub salt onto it.

At this point Geoffrey stormed out of the room. He strode through the passages and courtyard, passed through the stinking Crusaders' camp, and continued into the olive groves beyond.

He removed a rosary from his pouch and began reciting the first psalm from memory. With each psalm he advanced another bead along the string, and between each he inserted a brief prayer to Saint Hilary.

A squire found Geoffrey amongst the trees, staring across the valley. He had advanced thirty beads along the rosary, and the sun hung low in the sky, its rays cutting through the shifting leaves to dapple the wood with hard shadows. The squire stood a short distance away and coughed quietly. Geoffrey, grinding his teeth, turned his head toward the intruder and waited.

"Umm. . . Fra' Geoffrey? The Baron wishes to speak with you. . . about his sister. He, umm, apologizes for any offense caused. . ."

The Templar rose stiffly, put his rosary away, and nodded his assent. The two began back toward the castle.

"The Baron deeply regrets, umm, not having listened to your advice, Fra' Geoffrey. . . The girl. . . she, umm. . ."

"Died." Geoffrey finished the sentence for him.

Here the body of Sir Martin rested amidst a circle of candles before the altar, incense and the syllables of prayer and psalm thick about him. Several Templars had joined in the vigil, and the inept Brother Simon was notably absent. Anger was an inappropriate and deadly sin, and Geoffrey put it from his mind at once, silently praying for a few minutes by the man's corpse.

Then, turning to leave, he noticed a humbler form lying shrouded at the chapel's edge, without candles, incense or prayer to ease its soul's passage from the world. Lifting the edge of the pall he saw the face of Mari the serving girl, her bloodied face still twisted in pain and fear.



The servants had cleared the gore from the floor of the hall, and the Baron waited for his guest with a certain apprehension. He did not wish to be lectured or scolded. A part of him hoped that the Templar would feel so slighted that he would not come.

The door opened at length, and the squire entered. "Umm, Fra' Geoffrey, my lord."

"Thank you." The Baron rose as he greeted the stiff-necked Templar. "I am sorry if I belittled your knowledge."

"I have not taken offense." Geoffrey held it to be unseemly and petty to feel slighted, and would not show his failing. "You wished to speak about your sister."

The Baron sat again and signalled to the Templar to be seated beside him. "She stands to inherit this castle and the lands about it, and also lands in Champagne."

"Her husband's death was a blow to the Kingdom of Jerusalem." The Templar took the seat he was offered and accepted a mug of spiced wine from a servant. "I assumed that she had already inherited."

The Baron shifted uneasily. "There was a will. It stated that she would inherit according to the law, but only if she takes Vows of Chastity."

"She shall become a Vowess. Where is the problem?"

"My sister maintains an astrologer, and pays a great deal of heed to him. Amongst other things he determined the day of her marriage, though it doesn't now seem as propitious as he predicted. He tells her when she should travel and when not. They say he predicted her husband's death. In any case, he advises her not to take the Vow. He says she will have further chances to marry."

"She must be nearly forty! He must have miscalculated."

"Still, she believes the man."

"So, who inherits if she refuses to take the Vows?"

"Her husband did not want the lands to leave his family, whether by my sister marrying again or any other way. So the lands will go to his brother — but he is in Burgundy and has no interest in the Holy Land. He will let the estates here rot and will not lift a finger to fight the Moors. However, that is not the only reason why the matter might concern you."



"You want me to get involved?"

"Hear me, Fra' Geoffrey. My sister has only one son, Leon, who is a squire with the Count of Tripoli's household. He will soon be a knight and develops well as a soldier. And he is pious. I am told that he wishes to join the Order of Knights Templar.

"If my sister takes the Vows the land will be hers, and I can turn that to my political advantage. But when she dies the lands will pass to Leon — or to the Templars if he has joined your ranks."

"And if she does not take the Vows, the land will pass away from your family," the Templar noted, "and will never come to Leon. Still, after she takes the vow she might want to leave the lands to you. Once Leon has taken Holy Orders she might not feel obliged to pass his inheritance on to him. French law may be sympathetic to her."

"That is a blunt accusation, Fra' Geoffrey."

"It is an idle observation, lord Baron. I'll consider what you say."

The following morning, Sir Martin's body was sewn up in hide and placed in a coffin. Draped in a black pall, it stood before the altar in the church as the Baron's chaplain led the Mourning Mass.

From the church the coffin was borne outside the castle walls, out along the road toward the Templars' preceptory. The procession was headed by several monks and Templars, one bearing a gilt cross, another a Bible, the others thuribles and relics. Behind the coffin came the mourners, headed by the Baron, walking slowly and in silence.

It would take over an hour to reach the preceptory, and then another half hour to dig the grave. A suitable spot would be selected for the knight, alongside other respected noblemen and Knights of the Temple. That night lanterns would be kept burning around the grave, and when the masons had finished engraving it, a slab would be laid upon the grave. Ten years hence, perhaps, the bones would be exhumed and stacked neatly in the Osarium beneath the Templars' church, so the space in the graveyard could be reused for some other foreign adventurer.

But Geoffrey, on the castle walls, did not watch the cortege further than the first bend in the road. Instead he turned and strode down the steps, trying not to think about Cyprus. He had no idea what he might say to the Baron's sister, or how he could change her mind. Save for a few youthful indiscretions, women were a mystery to him, and he was not sure that debating with her astrologer would achieve anything.



In the chapel, two grubby, unordained clerics stitched Mari's corpse into a hide, and lifted it into a battered coffin. At the grave side she would be lifted out again and the coffin reused for some other peasant.

Geoffrey approached them solemnly, and spoke softly.

"The chaplain follows the knight's coffin. Who will say the Mourning Mass?"

The monks shrugged. "No one. The village priest will say a few words by the grave."

Geoffrey paused for a second. "Show me where the chalice and plate are kept, and bring me some bread and wine. I will say the Mass, and you will assist."

The two paused for a second, and then obeyed. The chaplain would be angered that another had used his church without permission, but the clerics hoped that they could blame the Templar. And Geoffrey knew he would be sailing for Cyprus by the time the priest returned.



The Landgrave stood by the window and looked out over the stables, the fields and the woods beyond, and thought of all the vastness of his wealth and the futility of it all.

"God's blood, Gilbert, you're saying you can't help the boy!"

"I am saying, my lord, that the medicines have stopped the condition worsening, and that we must wait until his month is complete to see how the illness breaks."

"His month — his month — how is that different from anyone else's month!"

"Dependent upon the date of his birth, his illness will reach a crisis point on a certain day. Assuming that you have correctly remembered the date of his birth, this should come in around four days' time. . ."

"How am I supposed to know remember when he was born? It was just before the feast of Stephen the Martyr — or just after. Or perhaps it was the feast of Stephen of Rome. How should I know?"

"It would help, my lord, if I could identify the stars by which. . ."

"Be damned with your stars, Gilbert! Be damned with your talk of complexions and humors, your urine chart and bottles, and with your precious piece of parchment from Montpellier. If you don't cure my son you'll be without a job, and quite possibly without a head. Do you understand me?"

The physician turned pale. "I have kept you healthy, my lord, for ten years. You have outlived two of your brothers. I.."

"Just get out, Gilbert, just get out!"

The physician hurried out and found that he was trembling. He did not believe that the Landgrave would take his head, but still hoped that when the child's illness broke it would be for the better and not for the worse.



Praise God this work is done. The quill is splayed. The knife weighs heavily. My arms ache. Day's light pales. Tomorrow I have other works to copy. This evening I wish only for a jug of wine, and for a face sweet and fair.

— Hugh de Bellier

Eve of the Feast of Saint Thomas, the year of Our Lord Eleven Hundred and Ninety Seven.









rom Enrico Aspasias, House Jerbiton, Roman Tribunal, to his revered *sodalis* Nebitrinus at Bellaquin.

My friend and colleague, I really must protest. Your latest tract reached me via a Redcap last Whitsun, and I find myself moved to reply.

As our House has always stood for learning and art, I cannot entertain the notion that we should forsake the towns. Your dislike of these settlements seems rather reactionary, to be frank, and while I can only admire Bellaquin's achievement you cannot expect other Magi to be as fortunate. You have attained wealth and respect in unparalleled measure, yet surely you can see that most Magi could never hope to flourish as you have.

For myself, I make no secret of my love for towns and cities, for these are hives of industry and craft, where objects of beauty and ingenuity are daily produced. I am partial, I confess, for I live in a town and maintain a house here — just as you live in the country and maintain a castle. Yet I can respect your motives in holding to the countryside, so why must you rail with such vehemence against my milieu?

Aided by a magical knife, a craftsman in my employ makes the finest parchment in Italy; our scribes and illuminators work for some of the most prestigious merchants, nobles and churchmen in Lombardy; we operate a service of hiring out mundane manuscripts to students here. Thus we have established excellent relations with the clergy, nobility, merchants and university, and have gained quite adequate finances. Is this not an ideal arrangement for a Magus? I also dispute your assumption that a Magus in a town must maintain some squalid, concealed sanctum, for I am certain that my townhouse is as comfortably appointed as your tower.

The times change, and wealth and power shift from countryside to towns. Should we not welcome this trend, which brings with it finer craftsmen and easier trade? And should we not move to the towns that we might benefit?

Of course there are difficulties for us in the towns, most notably resulting from our proximity to the priests and preachers who would burn us if they knew what we study. You speak of Magi proclaiming their



arcane powers in public and convincing the clergy of our innocence by debate and dialogue. This is not possible. This cannot happen in the towns — though I doubt that it has ever really happened anywhere for long. Even Bellaquin may one day come to realize that it cannot use honeyed words and fine art to appease the Church in perpetuity.

Here in the cities philosophy and logic do not overcome superstition. Rather, they codify and fortify it. The great learning of the universities does not lead to new discoveries, but merely strengthens age-old prejudices and instinctive fears. Thus our Arts will be condemned whatever we say or do, though not only by the Church's dogma and popular superstition, but by dogma and superstition elevated and maintained by the language of reason.

So we live here in rather greater luxury than you seem to suspect, benefiting from the art and crafts of towns while practicing our magics with no more difficulty than any other Magus. You would be a welcome guest if ever you chose to test the veracity of my assertions, and I would be delighted to meet with you after all these years. Perhaps you will never come to see the merits of the town, but we would doubtless pass the evenings pleasantly, debating like two old theologians.



To be delivered on the night of the full moon, to Nebitrinus (at Bellaquin).

Let's have no more of these pretty words and clever phrases, Nebitrinus. Your speech at the Tribunal meeting was a disgrace, and, as I said at the time, you are not even fit to call yourself a Magus.

You've spent so long around scholars and nobles that from talking with them you have begun to talk like them — not just the words and rhetoric but the ideas and goals. No! In fact you have become like them — you're one of them. Throw away your Gift, traitor; you don't need it now, "my lord" Mundane!

You say I'm a "blasphemer" as I'll burn a bishop as soon as a baron — I say you're a coward because you'll lick their shoes clean and praise their wisdom when they condemn you. I make my confessions and do my penance like any other Christian, and when I die I'll make my peace with God and beg mercy for my sin — but I won't stand by while some snivelling cleric poisons the people against us or calls us diabolists!

And don't tell me that I have an obligation to obey the nobles. How many of them have won their lands by battling against their predecessors, and how many barons have rebelled against their king? They fight against each other for power — I can play that game, too. They claim fields and forests and villages? Fine! I claim *vis* and tombs and arcane sites! They'll fight me if I try to take their lands? Alright then. I'll fight the hypocritical butchers if they try to take my magic.

I'm going to stand up to the puffed-up thugs! So what will you do? I'll tell you. You'll drag me in front of a Tribunal and accuse me of "interfering with mundanes!" And then you'll go back to Bellaquin and talk it over with the barons and the knights that you're so chummy with — and they'll laugh behind your back because you'll have done half their work for them.

What is it to you if my covenfolk are peasants, or my bodyguards are outlaws? Why do you care if I'd rather drink cider than listen to some fawning minstrel? Screw your marble icons, Nebitrinus. Leave your squeaking flutes, meet me under the next full moon, and we'll see whose studies are most likely to keep the Order alive. Wizard's War, Nebitrinus — try and lie your way out of this.

Trentus of House Flambeau



# OF THE ORDER OF HERMES

## CHAPTER EIGHT

I was lately presented with an exemplar of this monk's observations while abiding at a Tuscan monastery. The information is adequate, though the author's forced humility tries one's patience. It should provide a suitable orientation for the apprentices and *consortis* of our Covenant, who are so often unprepared for sorties into the lands around us, and so I have taken it upon myself to have a readable copy made and placed in our library.

The one omission which this monk has made regards our own worthy Order, and such as might read this text should understand our place in God's plan. It is not surprising, perhaps, that this monk did not know of us — so many of our *sodalis* carrying themselves without dignity or authority, hiding like frightened rabbits from mundane powers — but I shall forthwith rectify his error and scribe a brief addendum.

In what follows I shall explain the sorry state of our Order with regard to the rest of Christendom. I shall explain the difficulties which we inevitably face, and the disservices which we habitually do ourselves. But I shall do so as our preceding author has done, inserting imaginative writings and — so that I cannot be accused of spreading propaganda — including letters from those who might beg to differ with my interpretation.

### Of the Weakness of our Order and the Timid Reticence of its Greatest Minds

Providence has entrusted to us the secrets of forgotten times. We have a duty to preserve this unique heritage. This is God's purpose for us.

There are too many fools in the Order who deny that we have a duty to the Lord — but this is blasphemy. As God created Heaven and Earth, and all men and women, so we are his creatures and must obey His implicit ordinances. We do not seem to understand this. And so we do not demonstrate our virtuous purpose to the mundanes.

And thus a great many in the Church see us as diabolists. In this they are inspired by superstition, they are inspired by false causalities inferred from a misunderstanding of Aristotle, and they are inspired too often by our own actions.





Likewise, too many noblemen see us as political competitors to be eliminated, or as pawns to be manipulated. Why? Because we so often act as competitors, or allow ourselves to be manipulated!

The mundanes do not understand us. But we have only ourselves to blame. We must demonstrate that we can work alongside the Church and nobility for the betterment of Christendom. If we give them cause to condemn us, we cannot blame them for their hostilities.

Blinded by power, many Magi cannot see that they stand before God as we all do. Engrossed in study, great numbers fail to ask themselves what they work for. Corrupted by strength, they lose sight of their responsibilities. As I write, I do not only think of the reckless and destructive fools who follow Flambeau and Tytalus, but of many more besides.

Our Order stands divided, vacillating and purposeless. We act in conflict with one another, without control or respect, and so we each carve out our different courses and establish our peculiar relationships with our mundane neighbors. What madness this is! We give license to the low-born and foolish to bring the whole Order into disrepute. We grant the freedom to individuals to make gross mistakes, to squabble, to gain unnecessary enemies, to pursue crimes and blasphemies and heresies which reflect badly upon us all.

If any reader would understand our Order's role in Christendom, he must know this: We have not learned our place, and we cannot take up our proper role until we cease to grant individuals destructive freedoms. Rather, we adopt a multitude of roles, each Covenant or Magus creating a place for itself according to whim.

Our appalling relations with the rest of the civilized world are based primarily upon this single fact: We suffer the insanity of individual freedom. Just as God in Heaven stands above the seraphim, cherubim, thrones, dominations, and so forth, so the Pope stands above the cardinals, archbishops and bishops. And likewise a monarch stands above his magnates, knights, gentry and peasants. But we alone have decided to do away with order, ignorantly idolizing the *Demos-Cracy* of ancient Athens. But what were the petty squabbles of Athens compared with the glories of Imperial Rome? And did not Plato point to the fallacy of this *Demoscracy*, showing the *Demos* (as young Magi) swaying aimlessly from one lie to another as the mood took them? Indeed, not even the Athenians gave such freedoms as we — denying political power to the much greater part of their people — and they had stronger laws than we.

Until we have recognized that individual freedom is a menace, it is a mockery to name us an "Order" at all. Freedom pulls at any order. Freedom encourages anarchy, creates confusion and permits the actions of the least responsible to discredit their betters.



## Of the Relationships Between our Sodalis and the Common Peasantry

It is a sorry fact that our Order, weakened by freedom and recklessness, has so little power that its most frequent contacts are with common folk. Thus, we of great knowledge and power consort primarily with those who know of nothing but corn and cattle.

Different Magi, of course, form a variety of relationships with peasants. Certain Magi, unworthy of that designation, make no secret of their content with this tragedy, and horrific tales from more distant Tribunals even speak of Magi marrying with peasant mundanes. Members of more creditable Houses, such as Tremere and Jerbiton, waste no time in establishing proper relations with these commoners, ensuring that our superiority is recognized and that we are accorded due respect.

At one extreme, the Covenant of the Seven Sisters, in the Stonehenge Tribunal, considers it desirable that its Magi should be mistaken for impoverished peasants. Their wizards sit and drink with common farmers in nearby village inns, and they eat the same filthy food as their servants. As may be expected, there is little respect for these Magi. Their Groggs are unruly, their servants rude, and their orders frequently overruled by *consortis*.

Even more preposterously, the Domus Magnus of House Ex Miscellanea, Cad Gadu, expressly argues that the purpose of magic is to serve the common folk, rather than — as all sensible Magi know — the purpose of peasants being to serve Magi. Here Magi and mundanes live almost as equals, and I am amazed that the Covenant has not collapsed before now.

Cliffheart, in the Hibernian Tribunal, survives most happily by shunning the mundane population. Its rocky perch is quite inaccessible to the common folk, and the Covenant has very few servants. Thus, on my visit there, I found the community most admirably free of the petty bickering and lazy-minded chatter that fills the corridors of so many Covenants.

Here at Bellaquin, uncultured peasants are excluded from the castle compound, and the commoners employed as Groggs and servants are encouraged to turn their minds to higher matters, so that they may enjoy the privilege of elevated thought and conversation — and so that Magi need not be so sickened by idle drivelling. Those who merely till our land need have no contact with us, provided that they pay their dues as the law requires.

Other Covenants, such as Windgraven in the Pyrenees and Coeris in the Transylvanian Tribunal, have adopted a rather more extreme method of avoiding the inconveniences

of common ignorance. They employ their Arts to bend the minds and wills of their Groggs and servants, thus assuring unquestioning obedience and the absence of ignorant presumption.

Ignorance is indeed the most irritating characteristic of the common serf. How many Magi have been falsely accused of witchcraft, diabolism or blasphemy by horny-handed simpletons? Even those Covenants which have often aided or befriended the peasantry have found that these ungrateful dullards lay the blame on them for any disaster which befalls them. Should a plague or famine strike, all cry "witchcraft" as one and level groundless allegations against Magi. Throughout Christendom, Magi must always be sure not to display their powers before uncomprehending peasants, lest they risk being hounded as witches or Satanists.

For myself, I have often found the peasantry to be most excellent servants. Accustomed to deferring to clear superiors, they have no difficulty adapting to life in the service of a Magus or Covenant. For several years I retained as a servant a young lad from Catalonia, who had an urge to travel. I obliged him, and he accompanied me willingly — tending the horses, and seeing to my luggage and laundry — until at length we came upon a backward Covenant in the Rhine Tribunal. Here the good servant's mind was quite poisoned by a "Magus" Ex Miscellanea, who, while I spoke with more worthy *sodalis*, filled his head with all manner of irrational nonsense concerning the nature of justice. After leaving that place I found an invaluable servant transformed into an impudent scoundrel. He repeatedly asked why I should have the bed and he the floor each night ("Because I am a Magus and you a peasant!" I repeated each time), and on one occasion he even suggested that I might do his washing!

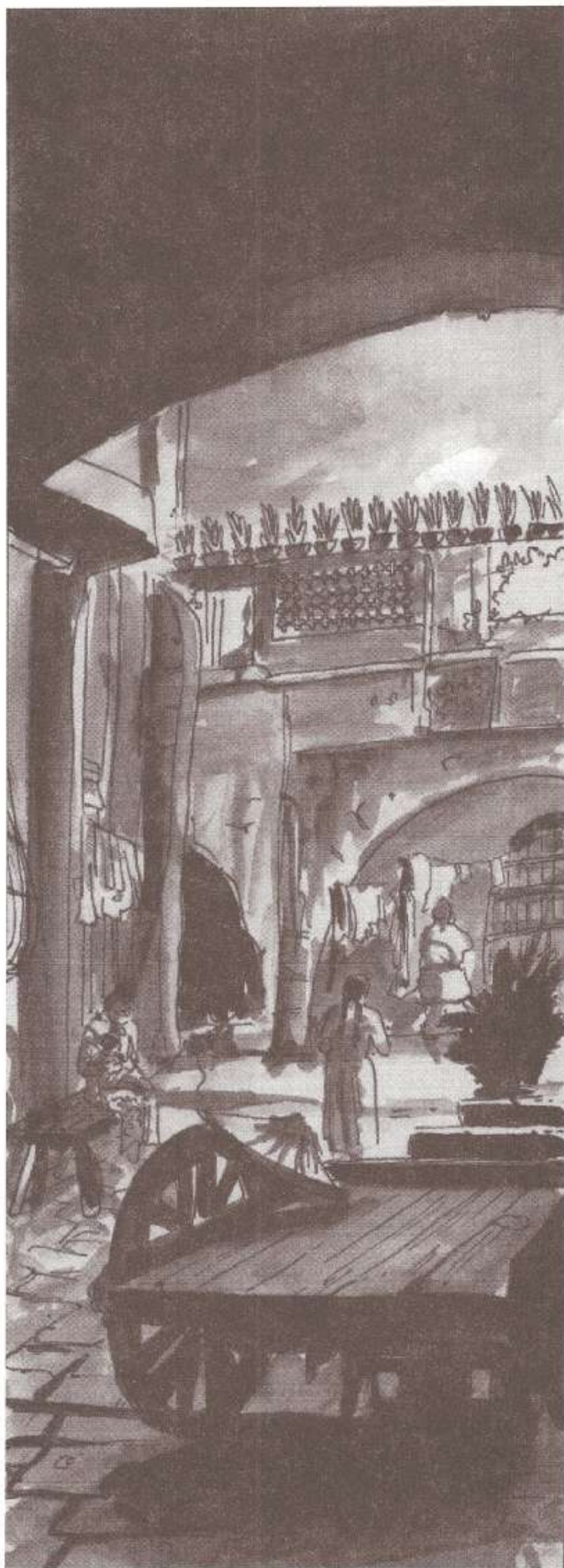
The simple fact is that God created these folk to toil and serve, and unless foolish Magi confuse them by excessive deference or consideration, they fulfill this function admirably. But many are easily led astray.

## Of Our Order's Alliance with the Unacceptable and the Inadequate

We accept the base, we embrace ignominy, we positively revel in disgrace. Our Order delights in being apart from the society which God ordained, and our Covenants welcome the outcast and inadequate with open arms.

At Bellaquin we take on servants of refinement and soldiers of distinction. We are patrons of the arts, we understand philosophy and theology, we strive always to attain what is highest and most perfect and holy in mortal





life. And although Bellaquin is not alone in its aspirations, there are too many Covenants where only the base, rejected and contemptible flourish.

How many Covenants maintain as valued Companions cripples and wastrels, filthy "visionary" hermits and "shrewd" beggars, ladies who have run from the responsibilities of their sex and serfs who have disregarded the obligations of their birth? There are too many.

Amongst the Groggs of our Covenants, how many outlaws and poachers may be found — and how many fugitive criminals, dishonored nobles, misshapen hunchbacks cursed by God, runaway peasants, sons who have forsaken their parents, wives who have left their husbands? There are too many.

And when our Covenants maintain the contemptible outcasts, shelter wrongdoers and steal serfs, can we really be surprised that our mundane neighbors mistrust us?

If our Order is to find itself a place in Christendom, it must learn to disassociate itself from these inadequate, contemptible and despicable people. It must associate itself with higher things. Only when all Covenants do this — as Bellaquin has done — will the Order attain the prestige and acceptance that Bellaquin enjoys.

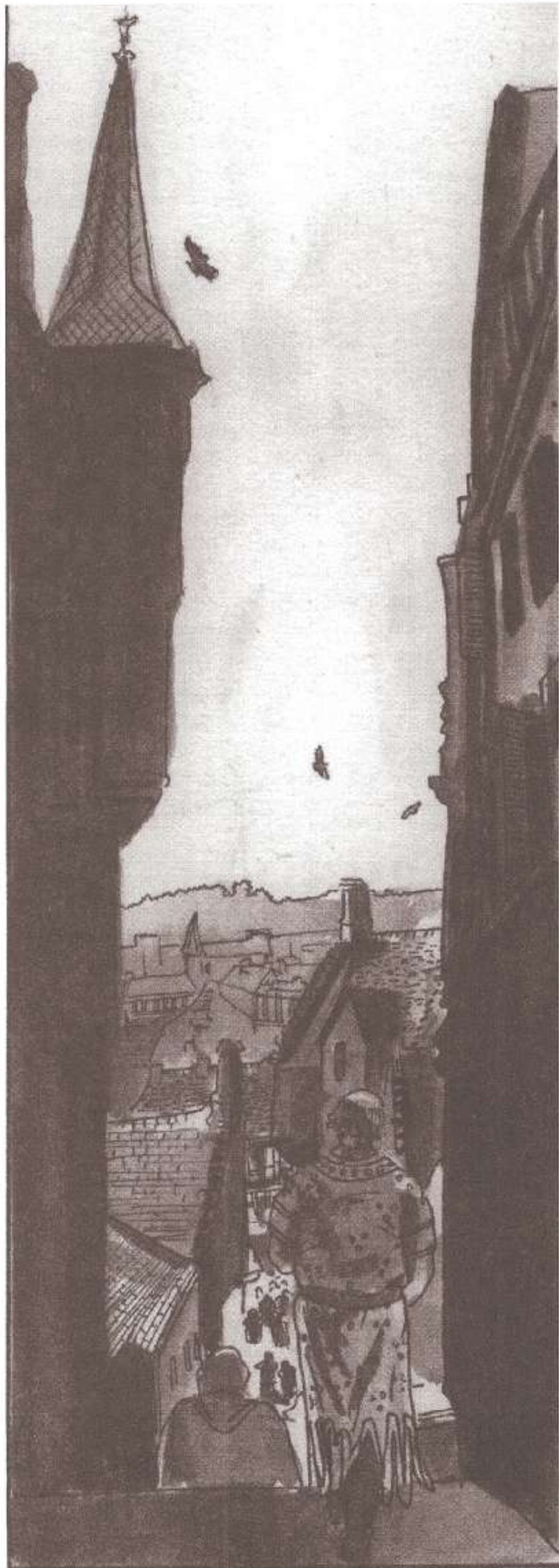
## Of the Absurd and Disgraceful Bearing of Certain Magi of the Order

A great weakness of our Order is the disrespect of its members for the common decencies and courtesies of everyday life.

It is self-evident that one does not challenge the social order which God has decreed, that others' property should be respected, and that one should not prevent others from fulfilling their obligations. But even these conventions are flouted by some Magi, who initiate conflicts with the mundane nobles who own the lands, pillage their forests, steal their serfs and interfere with the smooth running of the kingdoms of Christendom. Further, they defy the holy Church, refusing to pay tithes and opposing the construction of chapels in their Covenants. If Magi cannot respect God's purpose in even these obvious regards, then how can we hope to live cordially with mundanes?

Moreover, in their personal habits many Magi are a disgrace to the Order. Those who display bad table manners, talk out of turn, or do not address dignitaries with due deference bring the whole Order into disrepute. Those who openly doubt the truth of Christianity or otherwise blaspheme are a true menace to us all. And those who cannot show an appreciation of music, poetry, or philosophy make us appear vulgar and untutored.





The presumption of certain Magi is also absurd. Those young Magi, clad in coarse garments and without land or title, who expect to approach knights as equals thereby inevitably appear rebellious and rude. Even a Primus of our Order cannot be compared with a mundane monarch, and those who claim otherwise not only harbor treachery and blaspheme against God's purpose, but are guaranteed to cause conflict with mundanes.

## Of the Unnecessary Conflicts Between the Order of Hermes and the Secular Powers

By definition, the nobility are the class of people who own the land. (Large acreages may be given to monasteries or Cathedrals, but the vast bulk remains in the hands of secular lords.) They maintain this ownership by force of arms, each noble owing military service and money to his overlord in return for land, and the powerful overseeing their estates from string castles.

In other words — and Magi should mark this well — the nobility are the people with land, castles and armies. Therefore, any Covenant which fortifies itself so that it resembles a castle, or raises well-armed troops, or claims dominion over any lands, is implicitly claiming the rights of the nobility for itself.

The commonest dullard can imagine the reaction of a king or count to such a Covenant. The ruler will want to know if the Covenant means him well or ill. He will likely demand the Magi to recognize him as their overlord, as he ultimately owns the land they have built upon (even if they bought rights to it from the petty noble who held it before them), and if they refuse he will take them to be an enemy and most likely besiege them. Magi wishing to fortify their Covenants or raise strong Grog turbs therefore risk making enemies of local mundanes.

The nobility also cause other difficulties to plague Magi. They may demand rents and taxes from Magi who settle on their estates, refuse to allow serfs to serve as covenfolk or Grogs, and forbid access to their (often magical) hunting forests.

In all things, Magi must treat the nobility with great respect and tact if they wish to coexist peacefully, or else must be powerful enough to defeat a royal army. For not only do the nobles control all the law courts and armies, collect all the taxes and hold all the castles, but they have been set up by God Almighty to rule the lands we live upon.



Some Covenants, such as Tillivium in the Stonehenge Tribunal, have gained royal privileges which allow them to hold castles without swearing loyalty to the King, but such dispensations are extremely rare, as a king would see this as an erosion of his authority.

Others, such as Bellaquin, have established favorable relations based on mutual respect and aid. Bellaquin acknowledges the Count of Toulouse as overlord of the lands without formally swearing homage, and performs certain innocuous favors for him. In return the Count ignores Bellaquin. And thus the Code is maintained and the Count placated.

Other Covenants exist by living in places so desolate or remote that no notable mundane would wish to lay claim to them. The Pyrenees are littered by such Covenants, most notably Doissetep.

Other Covenants just hide like frightened rabbits, praying that the nobility will simply overlook them, while others have gone beyond the limits of noble power — building in magical *regio*, or living on seagoing ships.

Coeris, in the Transylvanian Tribunal, is perhaps unique in that here the Magi are so strong that they could repulse any mundane army which came against them, as they have often demonstrated. They alone may dictate their own terms to the mundanes.

Yet Coeris presents a misleading and dangerous example. Throughout Christendom young Magi from petty Covenants think they can stand against kingdoms far greater than Hungary, and have no sense of the danger thus brought upon themselves and the Order.

To oppose even a minor noble is dangerous, for his death or difficulty will be reported to his overlord. And if a Magus continues to oppose a baron or greater magnate, the king or count of the country will likely come to the aid of this faithful subordinate, and thus bring an army of knights against the presumptuous Magus.

Even a formidable array of Ignem magics is of little use against the charge of one hundred armored knights. A broad ditch may hold the calvary off, but cannot stop the arrows of their two hundred archers. Even magical ramparts of stone cannot feed a Covenant besieged by one thousand men at arms, and no one can hide behind Imágonem spells indefinitely.

Magi who wish to co-exist with the mundanes — as most of us must — first need to learn to respect the power and privileges of the nobility, conferred by God and too great to be flouted by any but the greatest Covenants.

## Of the Discord Between Our Ancient Order and the Holy Church

It is a great tragedy that relations between the Order and the Church are so fraught with conflict and distrust, for in truth both of us have been granted privileges by God and should stand together in His service.

There is no question of which is greater — the Order or the Church — for the holy Catholic Church is truly the Body of Christ on earth (as the Church Fathers said), it alone is blessed by the Holy Spirit, and headed by the Pope who stands in a line of succession from Saint Peter himself — the rock upon which the Church is built. And although God has granted Magi power over nature itself, this is trifling compared with the favor He has shown the Church.

Still, many foolish Magi insist on seeing the Church as an obstruction or an inconvenience. Absurdly, they say the Church should be fought, swept away or repulsed. Have they forgotten that even those nobles who oppose the Church politically are nonetheless baptized Christians? Do they not notice the Templars, Hospitallers and other Orders, who fight for Christendom? Can they ignore the tens of thousands of soldiers which muster when Crusades are called? And blasphemously, a few Magi even advocate a return to paganism, as if barbarism and falsehood were virtues.

The Church itself is too often antagonistic to our Order. Misinformed priests brand us diabolists and blasphemers (and the necromancers of our Order often confirm their suspicions — robbing graves, manipulating corpses and binding spirits). The leaders and politicians of the Church, the bishops and abbots, may be understanding toward Magi who present themselves as pious scholars, but wandering preachers and superstitious priests can often become hostile at the mere mention of a "wizard." And the Church's leaders will always move to oppose Magi who threaten the Church's power and privileges.

Thus, many Magi are decried as diabolists, hounded and sometimes even burned. Mundanes who aid us may be excommunicated. The most foolish Magi often die young for this reason, but in so doing they earn us a terrible reputation. Our own Grog and covenfolk may even be convinced to desert or turn against us if we are denounced by the Church.

Still, there are Magi and Covenants who have established excellent relations with the Church.

Some of our Order in the Rhine and Novgorod Tribunals, for example, have helped those armies which bring Christianity to the eastern barbarians — first the Wends, and now the Lithuanians. The Order gains the treasures of



the pagans' own magicians, and also parcels of land, whilst simultaneously proving that it supports Christianity and opposes paganism.

In the Normandy Tribunal and elsewhere, Magi have found that there are privileges to be gained by joining with the Church. A few Magi have been made minor clerics (such as lecturers, doorkeepers, and the such), finding that they thereby gain respect as churchmen, can only be prosecuted in Church courts, but are not obliged to undertake any real duties. I have even heard of one Magus who was made an exorcist, who in dealing with spirits uses holy ceremony as effectively as *Rego Mentem* magics. No Magus, however, has yet become a full priest, and it is believed that having been ordained, a Magus might find magic more difficult to cast, or may even lose his Gift.

In other places, Magi have hunted down heretics, and thereby gained the favor of the local clergy. Others have presented books to abbeys, or even share mundane libraries with small religious communities, and thus established favorable relations.

## Mundane Views of Magic

Magi and their servants who travel at all must understand how the mundanes view magic, and there are, broadly speaking, four common theories.

Most folk blindly accept that magic exists, and see no reason to analyze it. Both the common peasant and the credulous nobleman are quite prepared to employ self-proclaimed magicians, and almost every village has some old man or woman who professes to weave charms. So long as magic causes them no harm, does not involve demons and is used with respect for the holy Church, they are happy to tolerate it and employ its practitioners.

When magic is used to cause harm or commit crimes, the perpetrator is most often tried as any other criminal would be, or is accused of witchcraft. However, this capacity for magic to do harm has often led to kings passing laws against it in all its forms. In the Holy Roman Empire, for example, the practice of any magic is punishable by death, although this law has fallen into disuse.

The unthinking tolerance of magic that does occur is based upon the invisibility of magical effects. That is, mundanes accept magic only when they cannot see it at work. A blatant enchantment — and particularly a potent *Ignem* spell — may so terrify such folk that they cry "diabolism" and have the offending Magus lynched or burned for blasphemy.

Other fools claim that all magic is diabolical, and even assert that there are neither faeries nor ghosts, but only demons adopting misleading aspects. Moreover, churchmen who study in the schools and universities are becoming increasingly cognizant that all things have preceding causes,

and thus increasingly maintain that all supernatural events are caused either by divine or diabolical power. They cannot accept that magical power is a separate and preexistent force which we can harness.

Third, there is the view that all magic is superstition. Few hold such an absurd proposition, but some clerics insist that magic is either superstition or diabolism.

And finally, there is the view that magic is a science, just like arithmetic, medicine or alchemy, which may be mastered through study. The magics pursued by mundane scholars are, of course, empty or frail enchantments, but their own argument may be used to justify our practices to mundanes.

The best way to establish mundane relations might be for our Order to present itself as an order of scientists, rather than magicians, and thereby avoid charges of diabolism and witchcraft. Yet we must beware that such blatant magics as some of ours inevitably drive foolish mundanes to denounce us as diabolists.

## Of Ignominy, Dishonesty and Deception

One of the most general truths which governs the daily life of most Magi is that there is a constant need for deception. Many self-respecting Magi consider it intolerable that we cannot stand up and be counted as Magi, as scholars of the arcane. It is abhorrent to live a lie, to pretend to be that which one is not. Yet most of us are forced by circumstance to do just this.

Bellaquin is not unique, but is unusual, in that we can say to our mundane neighbors "*We are Magi*" and have them understand exactly what that means. They do not think of diabolism or witchcraft as so many mundanes do, because we have shown them a measure of what we do and have proved our virtuous intent. Other great Covenants enjoy this necessary luxury, particularly in the Tribunal of the Greater Alps, while in other lands (Wallachia and Wales, as examples) the locals are at least moved to fear if not respect by such statements. The cosmopolitan centers of learning and trade are equally tolerant of any scholar — Cordova, Palermo and Constantinople as examples — but throughout much of Christendom, prejudice and fear breeds hostility to self-proclaimed Magi.

Throughout the Order, numerous deceptions are routinely practiced by Magi. Some claim to be astrologers, others alchemists, physicians, herbalists or scholars, though they place themselves in great jeopardy should they discredit their own claims. Traditionally, Covenants have simply hidden from the world, building in isolated areas or weaving great enchantments to keep their existences secret, though trade and recruitment are both hampered by such retreats. More recently, individual Magi have sought ano-



nymity amongst the cities' crowds, and a few have even tried to integrate themselves with the ordained lecturers of the universities.

## Of the Duty of Our Order to Encourage Learning

It is a tragic truth that most Magi of our Order show no interest in mundane learning. Stupidly, we assume that our own Hermetic studies tell us all that we could ever need to know, and dismiss other wisdoms, assuming they have nothing to offer us.

On a practical level, it is well known in the universities that philosophy and logic underpin all other subjects, and that sound training in those areas better equips a student to go on and study other subjects. I see no reason why a sound mental training should not serve a Magus as well as any other scholar, and a grasp of metaphysics has certainly aided me in my study of Vim and Creo magics.

It must be that we Magi have an interest in the discovery and exploration of absolute truths — on all their levels. Not only does philosophy, in defining the cosmos, help us understand the nature of the universe which we try to affect with our magics, but so do other subjects help us understand our predicaments.



Theology explains what we, as human beings, owe to our Creator. Medicine investigates the human body just as thoroughly, and more practically, than does a Córpoem Magus. Law helps us understand what we can and cannot do, and may be used to prevent violent conflict with mundanes. Mathematics may be used to build grander buildings, stronger defenses and precision laboratory equipment. Astrology explains the relationship between our own world and the higher spheres — which even our magics cannot affect or investigate.

And should we not in any case be interested in discovering the truth? Of course it is our duty to establish truth from error. But furthermore, we all suffer from foolish fallacy — every time we are called witches or diabolists. We are too often victims of falsehood, and should work to erase it.

We should support the universities, with books and money, and should send our Covenfolk to be trained there. Imagine the uses of an astrologer who could make predictions about the future, or advise on the best time to cast a certain spell. Consider the value of a trained theologian who could argue with the Church — on its own terms — when charges are brought against us. The practical benefits of a physician are clear, and a lawyer would be no less valuable.

## And of Our Order and Art

Likewise, we have an obligation to sponsor the arts of music, painting, sculpture, goldsmithing, architecture, drama and poetry. For what would the world be without objects of beauty, and what joy would be in our souls without some artifice? And it is the undeniable duty of those with privilege — and who could deny that we Magi have a great privilege in our Gift? — to work for the betterment of their peers and subjects.

At Bellaquin, we have stained glass windows and eaves decorated with fine carvings. We have troubadours to entertain us (and sing our praises around the region). Our library is full of books illuminated with gold leaf and purple inks. We have not shirked our obligation to be patrons of the arts.

At other Covenants, however, the Magi have created environments devoid of uplifting artifice, and quite barren of any creative endeavor. Doissetep, for example, is a clumsy place, with stark defences and drab grey walls. Coeris, too, is a fortress built with only military ideals in mind.

Of course, some other Covenants are simply too impoverished to turn toward higher thoughts, and content themselves with peasants' achievements — growing better crops, aiding childbirth, navigating through forests, brewing wine. Cad Gadu, of course, is one of these. Lariander is another. One can only pity them.



## The Abominable Retreat of Worthy Sodalis into the Cramped Squalor of the Cities

Many Magi are now coming to forsake the dark forests and high crags in which they have formally hidden, but instead of holding their heads high they merely find new disguises, new methods of making themselves unseen.

Since the first Hermetics trod the desert sands of Egypt, we Magi have established our Covenants far from prying eyes and petty distractions. In proud towers and sprawling caves we have formed our worlds according to the demands of our study — a sanctum of the size we require wherever we wish, and a library where and as it suits us.

Yet now Magi seek to live in cities, confined to small plots of land and hemmed about by others' dwellings and workshops. They fit their sanctums and libraries wherever they can, always distracted by the common cries of pedlars and the murmurs and shouts of the rabble. Such Magi embrace the anonymity of the crowds, and in the largest settlements — Paris, Venice, Genoa — may easily be lost amongst the faceless multitude. Here they live and work in secret basements and back rooms, hidden behind the facade of herbalists', merchants' or scribes' workshops.

Mesmerized by the advantages of city life (the proximity of mundane scholars, regular fairs and markets, the ease of gathering news), these Magi do not see the danger of such an arrangement. Status in a town is dependent upon money, upon mercantile success. Magi in such settings can gain little respect for their wisdoms. Town life is an existence without dignity.

Some Magi, however, may gain a measure of recognition in more open-minded cities. Portraying themselves as alchemists or astrologers, they might make themselves known to their town's rulers, and demonstrate their ability to help with the defense of the town, the capture of criminals, or the gathering of intelligence. And if their magics appear innocuous, the town's rulers might strike up an alliance with them.

## Of the Vain and Misguided Efforts of Some Magi to Forge Links with the Universities

Some Magi have sought to find employment in the new academic establishments of Christendom, but without great success.

It takes five years to attain a university degree, and at least two more to gain a doctorate, which is usually required as a qualification to teach. In this time a great deal of detailed information is absorbed by students. There are very few Magi who have the time to study for a doctorate or have casually acquired an equivalent amount of knowledge.

The schools are all run by canons at cathedrals, or monks at abbeys, and outsiders are rarely employed, except perhaps on a very occasional basis. Universities usually hire only clerics (and many Magi object to having to join the Church), particularly for the teaching of Humanities and Theology. The only subjects which Magi might hope to teach are Astrology and perhaps Medicine. Those lucky enough to get such work, however, will find that for lecturing two or three hours each week they are paid enough to keep themselves alive and to run a laboratory. Such subsistence is unworthy of any self-respecting Magus, but no worse than the lifestyle of most urban Magi.

## Of the Difficulties of Funding a Covenant of Magi

We are in a quandary, we Magi, for while we need money to maintain our buildings and to fund our research, we have no obvious source of income. We are not landholding nobles, nor mercantile traders, nor churchmen taking tithes. We have only our magical Arts, in selling which the Code and our self-respect both hamper us.

So, we are forced to take on the role of merchants or nobles, in order that we might have the money we need.

Some Magi take the role of landlords, renting or buying the holding of large tracts of land which they then rent out again to freemen, or else appropriate waste ground in forsaken or unclaimed regions. Orchards and vineyards may also be acquired, as might woodlands which can be coppiced for timber or cleared for settlement.

Trade equally presents possibilities for Covenants to raise funds. Any large business — from brewery to shipwrighting to the cloth trade — can yield adequate



revenues, but certain ventures can be made more profitable by use of subtle magics. Using the appropriate magical Arts, Magi may trade safely across even the roughest seas, in the stormiest seasons. Swiftly carrying messages (using magically enslaved birds, for example) can often gain Covenants substantial gifts from grateful magnates. Trade in books or gems not only earns money but allows Magi to find occasional arcane or magical treasures. Mining may be particularly easy for Covenants with a Terram specialist.

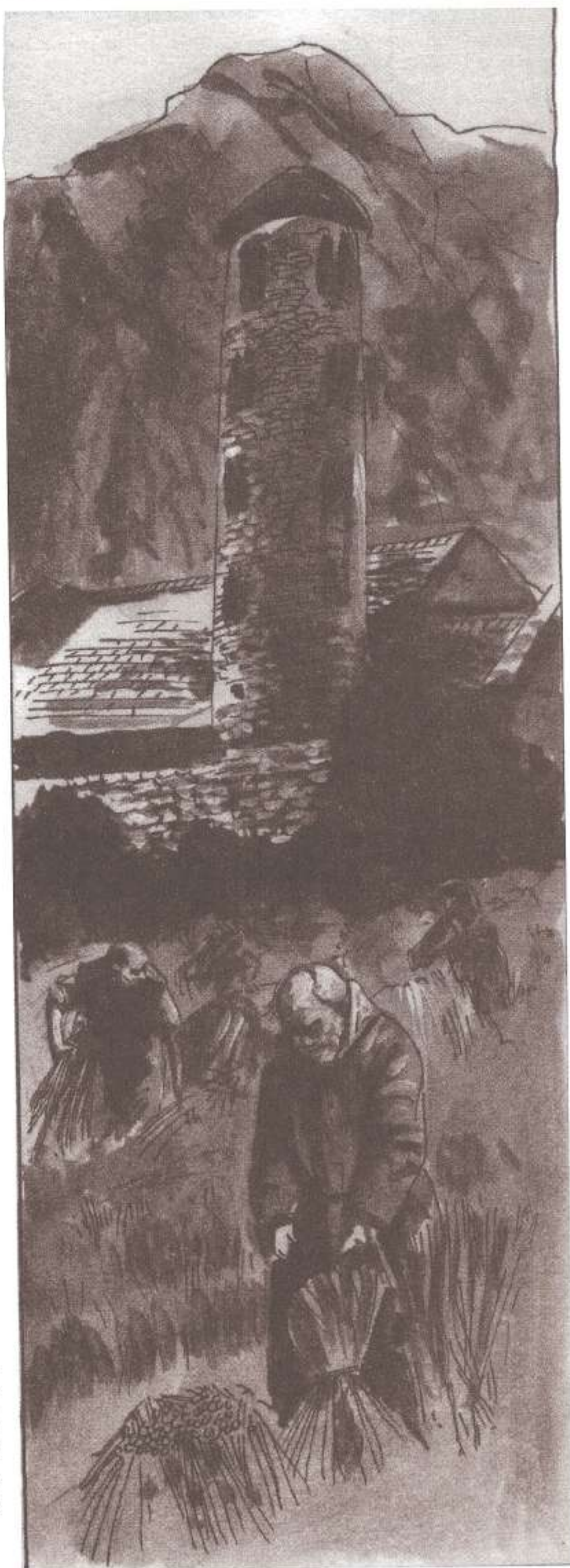
More unusual methods of gaining income are sometimes the most profitable, however. For example, a Covenant near to a hunting forest may undertake to keep the woods clear of poachers for the owner, thus being paid a stipend, gaining experience for its Groggs, and securing its own access to the land. Similarly, gaining custody of a bridge may also be useful, as the Covenant would be permitted to charge a toll for its upkeep — which it need not even spend, as Creo Herbam spells may be cast to stop it rotting, thus making repairs unnecessary.

Certain Magi, however, are reduced to gaining money through base and common pursuits. There are Covenants which run inns for travelers, taverns for artisans, and gaming-houses for common scoundrels. I have even heard tell of a Covenant which tours the Normandy Tribunal as a giant troupe of itinerant jongleurs, Magi and covenfolk performing for peasants to earn their keep.

Unscrupulous Magi have also been known to gain income through dishonest means. Magi have been known to unleash tame magical beasts on defenseless villages and then charge a substantial sum to rid the people of the "menace." Imágonem and Terram magics have been made to falsify temporary silver coins from iron or stone. Brigandage and magically-aided theft have sometimes netted considerable sums. In the Transylvanian Tribunal, it is common for Magi to simply demand "taxes" from neighboring nobles if they need extra money, and small scale extortion has been practiced in many Tribunals, to the shame of all upright Magi.

## Of the Problems of Recruiting Servants from Lands which Misunderstand the Nature of Our Order

Because we have made ourselves misunderstood, it is unsurprising that many Magi find it difficult to recruit willing Groggs and covenfolk, nor that many recruits prove unsuited to serving us. Far more dangerous than a hostile outsider is a servant who sees our powers and runs to the Church with her misperceived evidence.





Thus many Covenants recruit the undesirables already mentioned — scoundrels whose words would never be heeded, and who cannot afford to turn against the Magi. However, if Magi can abstain from or conceal their more distressing magics — their necromancy, Ignem magics which remind folk of hellfire, Mentem and Cörperem spells which smack of witchcraft — they should have few problems with more distinguished recruits.

Peasants are, after all, born to serve and obey, and so long as they are not frightened or abused, and so long as they are treated strictly and kept in their place, they will serve loyally. It is typically the maladjusted outcasts who become impudent and make trouble.

Poor freemen are Covenants' usual recruits, usually younger sons who do not stand to inherit adequate lands from their parents. Grog sergeants are usually the younger sons of minor knights and gentry. Younger daughters of poor peasants may be similarly recruited as servants, and respected Covenants may persuade petty nobles to send their excess daughters to them rather than to a convent.

More desirable, however, are Grogs and covenfolk who were born and bred in the Covenant. Such folk are already used to Magi and their peculiarities, and are not only bound to the Covenant by feelings of loyalty, but also by love and friendship for other servants. These folk are most unlikely to desert a Covenant, and rarely betray its secrets if they ever do leave.

Other particular sources of recruits are also available, particularly for Grogs. Unsuccessful Crusades often leave a body of experienced and hardened soldiers with no loot and

no ready employment. Similarly, unemployed mercenaries linger after wars have ended. These young men (without dependents to return to) may be persuaded to join a Covenant.

Upright men who have unfortunately fallen into debt may be hired in any fitting capacity, the Covenant paying their debts in return for their service for a certain number of years.

Covenants in Iberia or the Levant may be able to buy captive soldiers, servants and sailors from the Moors as slaves, promising them their freedom after a short period of service, and then offering them work thereafter. Elsewhere, commanders may consider selling prisoners of war to neutral parties as slaves instead of executing or freeing them.

## A Parting Word, by Way of Conclusion

It is my hope that this brief outline may be of use, whether to instruct our apprentices or inform our Covenfolk. The diversity of Magi, and the differing perceptions of us amongst the mundanes, requires us and our servants to be ever vigilant and thoughtful, always aware that we cannot know with certainty how anyone will view us.

This tragic farce is the greatest obstacle to the growth of our Order and its integration into the rest of the Christian world. For until the mundanes know who or what we are, how can they know how to respond to us, and how can they be expected to trust or even accept us?



Below, the Sava cut its swath between the ragged mountain sides, as Ivan stood in silence, watching its currents and crosswaters.

He had found the lads three weeks before, lying bloody by a road where their masters had given them up for dead. Pragmatically, the Magi had removed their armor and weapons before dumping them. No doubt the wolves were expected to make short work of their flesh, but Ivan had stumbled across them first — for what it was worth. Two had died despite his efforts.

The other had been walking for a week, and since then had followed Ivan everywhere, like a newly hatched gosling. The climb up to the bluff must have exhausted him, but he had not complained once. The waters swept past beneath them with deceptive tranquility.

"So, Peter, you're fit to travel when you wish. Where will you go?"

"May I leave, sir?"

"You can do as you wish." He turned to watch the young, down-turned face, and reflected that thought did not come easy to the lad. "And don't call me 'sir'."

"Then I'll go home. To the Masters."

"They left you to die, Peter."

The boy paused. "It's my home, sir. My friends are there. My Masters are there. They fed me and trained me. . . It's my home."

Ivan turned back to the river. He watched the cold strength of the cliffs, the quiet power of the water, and wondered at the unstoppable brutality of God's purpose. Anger swelled in his stomach, and a tear in his eye.



Hohbert dropped the hay, and placing the cleft point of the pitchfork in the earth, he leant upon its shaft.

"You'd have thought to do what?" he scowled.

"I've a mind to take the path to the tower on Sunday, and see if they'd be looking to recruit soldiers."

"So you know some soldiers, then, Bannan?" the elder scoffed. "Course they need new men! They got three killed last Easter chasing them forest folk. You remember that, aye?"

"Aye, I do."

"As you should, you clod, one o'them were our cousin, Ruod. . . Listen, you're just hurting 'cos old Amal said you couldn't wed his girl. Let it pass, eh?"

"Let it pass. Aye. Easy for you to say." Bannan worked on in silence for a minute. "When Father dies you'll get these fields and I'll get nothing. That's why Amal turned me down. I got nothing here to stay for, and I'm not as clueless as Ruod. I'll look after myself."

"P'raps." Hohbert chewed at his cheek. "But p'raps Ruod thought as he could fend for himself and all."

Bannan didn't answer, and Hohbert went back to piling hay with an irritated vigor. Bannan was right, of course, about having nothing here — the lands would barely support one family, and could never feed two. He'd have to find something else to do, and to serve in the tower as a servant or "Grog" was the closest opportunity.



"Our master sleeps soundly." Lorcan sat on the log beside the hunchback.

"Err... if you say so." Eoghan looked away, avoiding the thief's one-eyed stare.

"You know, that little statue's solid gold. Very pricey. Quite apart from the torques and the brooches."

"Really."

"Doesn't it strike you as unfair, Eoghan? We all shared the danger when we broke into the tomb. But what happens to the money? The Magi get it... You know, I reckon we could get eighty pounds for that lot, easy... Colm and Olwen can't even count to eighty. But even they think it's unfair."

"Rhongwen won't let you take it."

"But she's asleep, too. And we've already taken her sword."

"If that's what you want, Lorcan, I won't say anything." The hunchback lied. "Do what you will. I'll keep quiet about it."

"I know." The thief clenched the dagger in his palm by his side. "I know you will."



The worst thing about the Inquisitor was the way that he smiled. It was a thin, eager little curl to his lips, accompanied by a narrowing of his eyes, which might have seemed to express a genuine glee — an honest pleasure at the thought of bringing another heretic to justice. It was a smile which crept across his face most often at the end of an interrogation, and when he was really pleased his nose twitched, as if catching the scent of a pyre.

The Bishop had sent the little man two weeks before, to investigate "the wizard so oft entertained by Sir Henri de Barre." At his approach, the conjurer had fled. No one had seen him leave, but the credulous spoke of a great grey bird flying from the window of the guest chamber that night.

"And so, Maurice of Althbec, you still maintain that you have no knowledge of your sorcerer's lair? You have followed this conjurer of spirits all the way from Palestine — so tell me — where have you been staying all these years?"

"Inns. . . monasteries." Maurice gurgled, blood from his broken nose dribbling down his throat.

"Then you will tell me the names of these monasteries." The Inquisitor paused, but did not expect any more. For three hours he had gained no specific details from the soldier. "The whip again, gaoler."

The chord stung across Maurice's side, and he slumped backward in his chair.

Later, perhaps a minute or perhaps a day, he heard himself groan dully, and smelt vinegar.

"Hush now, my boy," a woman's voice cooed softly over him, "quiet now."

He opened his eyes slightly, and saw a young maid leaning over him, tending his wounds. The Inquisitor stood by impatiently, tapping his foot.

The maid applied the vinegar with a soft sponge, and Maurice thought that the Covenant's surgeon had never been able to dull pain so easily. And the vinegar, whatever its appearance, felt thick and gritty on his flesh, like some alchemist's concoction. "That's right, very quiet," the maid repeated firmly. Maurice felt her skin brush against his — lily white, but coarse, like a man's — and he realized that the ropes loosened around him.

The maid stood and looked down at him, her mouth twisting into a wry, masculine grin. "That should do it." And in his hand he felt the sudden coldness of a sword hilt.

Three minutes later Maurice walked from the castle wearing the Inquisitor's robes, as the real cleric lay bound and gagged and plotting his revenge in the dungeon. Maurice smiled, and glanced with relief and gratitude at the great grey bird in the sky above.





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