



CHRONICLES OF ARTHUR'S HEIRS

VOLUME I

THE CHRONICLE OF CLOMBENDORN

By

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BOOK I

THE TALE OF THE DARK TOWER

PART I: THE KNIGHT'S QUEST

One cold morning in a kingdom west of Logris, early a morning in September, the lady Alyson was stolen from her father's castle by a strange knight who had been guest therein for one night only. And Merlin, who by chance (or ablings by design) had been there for some weeks, cast a spell upon her, at a distance, that no

harm might come to her, nor would she age at all, until the last knight to seek her safety had either set her free or given up the quest.

And Merlin told how far a knight might go before he needed further rede, and told of how a man might know the place of the lady’s prisoning if he should come to it.

And many knights there were for years who sought the lady Alyson, and in the passing of that time there did befall the prisoning of Merlin by the Lady of the Lake and eke the woeful overthrow of Arthur’s reign, as other tales have told. (But loss of Arthur’s rule was foretold to be remedied by a return, though that indeed might be long delayed.) And thereafter for many years there were none who sought, yet the spell, no doubt, stayed strong upon the lady, for at least one more was still to seek her: Roland of Castlemere, a younger son of the lord of that domain.

Now by that time the story of the Quest of Alyson was deemed by many to be little more than tale for children and old wives. But a sage in her father’s kingdom still kept a scroll which held all that had been learned of those who sought her freedom. And Roland, who being a younger son had learned to read, studied well that scroll and gained the knowledge that had been written down.

And in the scroll he learned how Merlin had told of how the quest should start and of the place where it would end. And there were words which the sage told him were also Merlin’s, and those words upon the parchment said: “Fight for freedom of the lady. Dare not defeat of the Dark Tower.”

And others had added, from knowledge of the fate of those who failed, that the doom of that Dark Tower, near the end, lay in wait for those who took this quest. But whether those knights had sought rid the world of some great evil, or were lured by thoughts of peace and rest or by the promise of wealth for hiring of their swords, no one could say. Only this was written in the Lore of the Quest: that of those who rode not home again, leaving lady to what her weird might be, all who died not on the way had stopped at the Dark Tower their travelling and search. For none had heard of them thereafter, and of some was it said that they had forsaken the quest on which they had set out. And this at least was known, that these had asked, early or late, the way to the Dark Tower. Some, it may be, had asked from hope to find the lady Alyson nearby, but none who read the Scroll of Lore could doubt that all had found that journey’s end to which they had asked way. This Roland knew, who followed all.

He came first to crossroads Merlin told of, and there a couple kept an inn who

told him, with smiling hidden behind their eyes, that old tales spoke of knights who went by there on quest of lady ever young, and they pointed out the way tradition said those knights were wont to follow. And that accorded well with the lore upon the parchment, and he rode blithely on.

From that first crossroad he wandered far, following one time the lead of knight who went astray and then retraced his steps; or, by good hap another time, staying but upon the early track of one who later rode amiss; or finding that the Scroll of Lore in parts was wrong. And there were mishaps and long delays, and partnerships in quarrels, and sometimes, he could almost swear, wanderings in and out of Faerie, along the way. Yet never did he forget his journey’s goal nor with intent turn aside.

For many years he sought the lady Alyson, until he came unto a village that had never seen its lord. And he was told that though his lands were wide it was not this that kept the lord from travelling oft to those who worked them for him. Rather was it courting of a lady that would not have his love, said tale folk told, in friendly mood at tavern fire.

“Nor his grandsire’s either,” said an old man once, and laughed behind his hand. But another looked at the old man sternly, and those who were there would

say no more. So Roland rode from that village.

On the way he met a pedlar, who seemed to know his road within that lord’s domain, and he struck speech with him.

“Sir Pedlar,” said Roland as idly they talked while one shared bread for wine of other, “meseemeth I have heard that somewhere in this country a lord keepeth prisoner a lady who ageth not, and seeketh in vain to gain her love, as others strove before him.”

“‘Tis true enough,” the pedlar said. “Lord Osgern, back that way. If time ye have, ask lodging – ye might get a look at him, so pale and gaunt. They say the desire groweth worse from son to son, or so seemeth. ‘Tis wonder they have any sons, men say, yet somehow the family goeth on. Or hath, till Osgern.”

Thus talked the pedlar to Sir Roland blithely, for at five-and-forty years he seemed a knight no more. A man-at-arms for hire, he deemed he looked, and his cloak hid for him the crested pommel of his sword.

And so they finished eating, and Roland mounted again the last of many horses he had saddled in that quest. But before they parted, he turned his head and asked, “What have ye heard, Goodman, of the Dark Tower?”

Then turned the pedlar pale, and said, “By heaven, art one of those. Heed the

old warnings, man, if ever thou heardst them – and thou must, or thou wouldst call the place by its common name. The Devil’s curse safeguardeth that stronghold. Men say the Devil built it.

“Go ask Lord Osgern for thy supper, man, and go thy way. Forget the Dark Tower.” And the pedlar shook his head.

“Which way to Osgern’s castle?” Roland asked him.

“Next road to the left,” quoth he, short now of speech, and he got upon his mule and rode his way.

And Roland rode his. He took the road upon the left, and came thus to another crossroad, where a crippled man sat begging. The road beneath lay straight ahead, and to the left a fair road lay. And to the right was faded path, whereon sunset seemed darkened early.

Sir Roland gave the crippled man a coin. “Goodman,” he said when the man had put it away, “I would know where dwelleth the lord who keepeth captive a lady ever young. Where might I find such man?” And the old man nodded his withered head, with grey eyes gleaming, toward the path upon the right. And Roland took it, though he saw not how a lord of holdings fair could bear to rule all these from such a stretch of land as this that lay before him. He did not wish to

call the old man liar. Tempted, though, he was to say, "Such a lord is one to be avoided," and go another way. But he had asked direction, and it seemed fitting then to follow it. But first he left his horse behind, as the land to travel now seemed no fit place for faithful beast.

Through a dreary land and grim his steps now took him, and as he trod the path he pondered what must be done if indeed they took him to the tower he must not seek. For if he found Dark Tower standing athwart the way of quest, then overthrowing lord of it might be but part of quest itself, to free the lady sought so long. Therefore himseemed that he might rightly and with full weight of Merlin's wisdom take that tower's lordship for himself.

Yet he felt somehow that if he gained the wardship of that fabled tower, and the wealth and power of it, then he would seek no more, by light of youthful dreams, to free the lady ever young. Thus he doubted, once in his whole lifetime, his soul's weird.

And thus his journey brought him to a tower short and round, and builded of huge brown blocks of stone, with old signs of battle round about. He felt that there was no return from this, without combat with its lord. Yet he had not sought such battle, and therefore felt that he might live to overthrow that lord. Yet he

pondered: Could he welcome battle now, or must he try at first to flee? But he had seen the landmarks and he knew, what no knight living now had ever seen, that the strange Dark Tower held the lady of the quest.

Glad was he. But one doubt he had yet. For he thought that it might be, in taking the road to the Dark Tower, that the ancient cripple pointed out, that his heart had forsaken quest. Ablings the lady could be harmed now and mayhap grow old in that frightful tower, with its lord. Or it might be that he, last knight with faith in this her quest, would fail, and she would be forever in her youth a prisoner, endlessly besieged. It might be mercy in him, therefore, to bend his heart upon the tower's wardship. For if he won it, she would still be free.

From his head he shook away such doubting. For he knew that ladies imprisoned are meant for fighting over, and a knight must follow his quest. Thus, only the fighting remained for him to do. And so, he raised the horn he bore on tattered baldric, and winded high his challenge to the tower's lord.

*Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came.*



THE TALE OF THE DARK TOWER  
PART II: THE LADY'S PRISONING

Early a morning in the fall, the lady Alyson was brought outside her father's castle, while a deep enchantment held asleep the guards who kept the gates. He who bore her thus was a knight named Enfarg, who had come to the castle on the day before, in full armour and well horsed but without companions.

Enfarg took her to a tower of the gatehouse, and there began to change. His gauntlets became claws that stung her flesh a little before he quickly loosed somewhat his grip upon her. The scale armour that her father's men-at-arms had wondered at on one so richly weaponed, now was scale indeed. (He told her later that he could not suffer chain of any kind upon him.) And he flew from gatehouse tower, bearing her in crook of forelegs bending upward, with the talons curling down. And his claws were tightly clenched, so hard it was to bear her thus.

So the dragon bore her straight, as crow flieth but less blithely, to a dark tower in a wasted land, where servants gave her for herself a chamber richly furnished, till he could come to her in man-shape. And they fed her food whereof the sight and smell and taste kept fear of it away, so that she suffered naught but prisoning and dread. When five days had passed, the knight came to her chamber. And when they had talked some time, and she forebore to plead for freedom but only spoke of other things that came to mind, he left her to herself. He came again on other days, in man-shape always, and when she knew him well enough for to believe that some great need had driven him to stealing her, he told her of his curse and of the boon he wanted.

He told her of his father strong, who he said had kept a castle in this land now wasted and had held the lordship which the tower still commanded. But once his father, who had great power of his own, had dared the wrath of a mighty sorcerer, and war had been between those two. The tower at that time was twice as tall as now, and the power that Enfarg's father had, ruled from it all his castle. But in a moment of great terror the warlord drew that power back upon himself, to save himself alone, when all else seemed doomed despite his power. And though he sought to draw it all upon himself, his power yet filled half the height of his high

keep, and this much had remained to him when the castle and his own privy land about it were taken and laid waste. (A lesser power of his own had held within the tower's rule the other domain about this land, and that the sorcerer could not break while he fought the greater force.) And the lord's power bore him up but he could not wield it then, and in that weakness a spell was laid upon him that left him, in divers times and at strange seasons, dragon-shaped. There was one way to break that fell enchantment, and that way the warlord knew, but the knowledge had availed him naught, and the curse was passed to Enfarg, who was begotten by the warlord after those things were done.

And Enfarg said that nothing could break the spell save that a maiden lie with him, mayhap not gladly but at least of her own will, in a time of wearing of the dragon-shape. For Enfarg said the curse was such that if a maiden acted thus, of her mercy, the power of the spell would break, and he would be a man at all times and forever, and his heirs also, thereafter. But if no maiden broke the curse, any son of his begetting would have the dragon-shape in such seasons as he himself was now held by it.

Alyson was frightened and filled with great disgust, and bade him leave the chamber, and he bowed to her and left. But oft he came again and looked at her

with pleading in his eyes, and ever she shook her head without a word and caused him to depart. And sometimes in dragon-shape she heard him crawl about the hall at night. For there were slitherings and rustlings as he went to and fro with hope and great forbearance, beyond the chamber door which her will alone kept shut against him. And she asked him once to let her leave, but he would not.

Now, there came a day when, as they sat at dinner in the room which served as their great hall, with Enfarg's servants all about them, he suddenly took on the dragon-shape. And as he went up the stairs to tower's top, the servants withdrew from serving and went to windows and gazed over the land about the tower. When some time had passed, a knight was seen, riding toward the tower. And when the knight drew near, Enfarg swooped down upon him, and the fight between the two was short. And Enfarg ate the knight, but his horse escaped, for the knight was quick with sword, and both could not be killed without danger unto dragon.

When Enfarg came back inside, he bade a servant take from a claw of his left forepaw a patch of mail, for one of the links thereof had stuck upon the talon-point. The servant smeared butter on the claw and with a hammer small he softly tapped the link till it slipped off. And Enfarg sighed and said, "Alas! I have not

tasted frightened horse so long a time.” But when he had rested and his blood was quiet, his shape as man came back to him. And Alyson asked him why he fought the knight not fairly, sword to sword and horse to horse. But he laughed and said, “Who seeketh a dragon’s hoard will find a dragon guarding it, while yet that dragon liveth.” Then he looked into her eyes and said, “While yet he liveth as dragon, anyway.” But she looked straitly back and shook her head. And he went not back unto the meal that coming of the greedy knight had broken in upon.

Other knights there were who came, from time to time, and always Enfarg was ware of them by changing of his shape to dragon, and always he slew the knights, and most often ate their horses also.

Now Alyson, to pass the time, gained wisdom, for in her prisoning she called to mind many things she had heard and seen, before the stealing of her, and she turned them in her mind and pondered anent their causes. And she thought much upon such things as were told her of Enfarg’s outer domain, and sometimes through the servants she gave good rede and mended matters needing it, in lives of them that dwelled there. And Enfarg did not deny her this, lest she set her mind against him and mar such peace as those of his tower could enjoy.

Enfarg grew older slowly, but Alyson grew not old at all. And he knew why

that was so, or rather he guessed at it, for he had felt the reach of Merlin’s power at her father’s castle-gate. But in his great need he told her naught thereof, but only said himseemed that she was meant to free him from his curse. For, he said, he knew it would take long time for any woman to welcome thought of ugly dragon as her lover. “And,” he said, “an aging woman with no spirit left for ventry would have not room for great misgiving as to whether lust or mercy moved her. She would not, therefore, be using that great power over self which alone can break the spell that holdeth body mine.”

But she still denied the deed he sought, and as he had not what seemed her power, to stay at one age always, he, as he grew older, wearied of endless asking, and wanted not the wooing of another maiden to his dragon-shape. So he took into his tower a woman from one of his villages, who was not loth to grant him pleasure of her, in his man-shape. For he said he had no need to marry, and he was lord of that domain. Alyson asked him why he would pass on the curse and would not only die and leave it. But he said he wanted to defeat the curse and have it lifted from his family, whereon it had been laid. And he said that for her withstanding him, his own son would take revenge, by dogging her with the same desire.

When Enfarg’s leman had conceived and when her time had come, that whereof she was delivered was a dragon born alive. Alyson, who attended the birth with other women of the household, swooned upon the floor. But the old woman who played chief midwife brought her back unto her wits with putting cold water on her forehead and burning some feathers beneath her nose, and told her there was no great cause for dread. “It meaneth only that the curse hath passed unto the child,” the beldame said, “for if this had been but dragon only, she would have laid an egg, albeit larger much than those we boil in kitchen, and one that heat could never hurt.” For that old woman’s granddam had been there as a girl, she said, when Enfarg’s mother bore him, and had told her all about it, and had said that Enfarg was a dragon born alive and small. And she said the son would change when that his mother suckled him the seventh time, and they found that that was so, and the dragon turned into a manchild, healthy and strong and good to look upon as a woman beholdeth infants. It seemed to matter not to the comely village woman that her son was born a dragon, for it was the child of her body and, as she alone could know without witness of that shape, the child of her own stern lord, who had stood staring out a window in the room wherein she lay at labour.

Enfarg was free in spirit after that, and never changed in body, but stayed a goodly man in mien, though not for trifling with by any of his household, wherein he always stayed. For it seemed his power kept him there.

Alyson grew fond of Enfarg's son, who was named Osgern, though he seemed through his mother's spoiling him a greedy boy, and she had fondness also for the clumsy dragon youngling he at times became, and she felt sorrow for the thing of longing he would be when he had learned what gulf there was between the two lives his body led him.

Only twice in Osgern's growing up in dragon-shape did he need defend the Dark Tower. And when the first of those two knights set horse's hoof upon the waste, the dragon-shape came on him as he lay before the fire, and he gan crawl toward the tower stair. But when Alyson asked Enfarg why he would let the child defend his tower for him, he only stared at her and shook his head. And she thought that a bling only dragon might defend Dark Tower. But when the knight drew near the tower, Enfarg took up bow and arrows and shot the knight's horse under him. Then Osgern flew upon the falling knight and bore him to the ground and tore his flesh and slavered as he ate him. And Enfarg and Osgern dealt likewise with the second knight who troubled Osgern in his years of dragon-



growth. For his dragon-shape grew more quickly than he grew into manhood, and while yet a boy he was already dragon grown. And Enfarg trained him also in weapon-fighting, from early boyhood.

Now Osgern grew in late boyhood, as time went over them and over Alyson's unchanging body, the thing which she had dreaded, and his longing was greater and more piteous than his father's once had been. But only the longing was piteous, for he himself was not good-natured, nor courteous in manner save sometimes in mockery, and her fondness for him, in either shape, lessened and then passed utterly.

Now, with the passing of his dragon-shape, Enfarg grew old more quickly, and six months after Osgern came of age in dragon-shape, Enfarg died. And Osgern took the body of Enfarg down into the deepness of the tower, where he said he would bury him. But none followed him with pickaxe or spade, so Alyson thought that there were tombs already made, or that tools were kept down there for that doing only.

After death of Enfarg, Osgern grew more quickly in his man-shape, until he came of age, and then he aged more slowly, and the life that Alyson did live with him was like the life she had lived with his father, save that it was worse.

Long the lady waited, wearily but with lasting courage, in the tower of Osgern Dragonheart. But young she was in body, and oft, therefore, in mood, while her mind grew older. And ever her mind and will withstood the pleading of Osgern to do what would destroy his dragon-curse, no matter what mood was on her. For what he asked, and what his sire had sought before him, herseemed sinful and of great dread, albeit good might rise therefrom. Thus had it seemed when Enfarg first besought her, and thus it seemed throughout her prisoning, though at times in spiteful wantonness her spirit seemed to welcome what was wanted of her.

But Osgern would not let her go. And the only time she asked it of him, for she said he never would have use of her, he answered, "What use hath any dragon for any treasure kept by him, my gem of all delight?" And he laughed a dragon-laugh, and changed his shape awhile.

Osgern in his dragon-shape slew other knights as time went by. Some were slain further from the tower, and others nearer thereto, as Osgern was moved by hunger or by whim. And the signs of those battles lingered fresh long time upon the dragon-waste.

But Osgern had not the forbearance that his father had, to wait until his middle age to break the curse or pass it on, nor could he, therefore, wait to die and thus be

rid of it. Thus he seemed to Lady Alyson. So one day as they sat at table after dinner, which was late that day, Osgern said, "I have been reading in the teaching of the saints that if a maiden is taken against her will, she is still as pure as she had been before, no matter what men might think of her body thereafter." And he smiled a dragon-smile, and said, "I am minded to try the saintly teaching's worth. For I doubt not thou wilt yield thy will the second time, or else the third. Dragon-tastes soon shape the mind." But suddenly knowledge came to him as a knight set foot upon the waste, and he got down upon the floor and gan crawl toward the tower stair. But his dragon shape had not come on him, and he stood again, in mild amaze.

"My dearest love, thou hast a rescuer, meseemeth," quoth he. "Great good may it do ye both. But see thou how long he stayeth rescuer as the lure of the dragon hoard shall draw him forth." And later he came to her, in his full armour, and he took her to the top of the tower, and set a chain upon her wrist, that she might not throw herself down from tower and escape him thus. As they waited for the knight to come in sight, Osgern stamped sometimes, and clenched his fingers and looked at them, and wriggled his body in a manner hideous. But the dragon-shape came not upon him. And the knight strode now to where they both could see him,

and came toward the tower. And still no dragon-change befell.

“And he slayeth me, I die a man,” said Osgern then. “But if I come back, in whatever shape my body cometh, it shall give thine a son. Whether he shall bear the curse or not, let his mother choose!”

As Osgern stept lightly down the tower stair, she heard the knight outside the tower wind his horn.

*Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came.*

## THE TALE OF THE DARK TOWER

### PART III: THE WIZARD'S QUEST

In the days of Osgern Dragonheart, the son of Enfarg Manflesh, a scroll was written which bore the true tale of lore, so far as it was known, anent them and their dragon-shape. This lore was gathered and set down by an old and very learned wizard, who meant the scroll to be given, at a proper time, to one who could use the knowledge which was written thereon.

That scroll told of a castle fair, in a far country, which a dragon had attacked and had destroyed. The dragon had killed the lord of that castle and had eaten him, and had gone into the keep and made it his, and brought to it his hoard of many years. Thence, for a time, the dragon plundered other lands, and he stole much goodly treasure, both of gem-stones and of gold.

But a wizard who had loved the castle's lord and done great deeds with him in

younger days, assailed with his great magic the dragon's stolen stronghold. And he destroyed utterly what the dragon had left of the castle, save half the keep. But the dragon-evil, which was strong, had by then filled half the tower from below and crept deep into the stones thereof and turned them dark, and all the wizard's wisdom could not break that down. But in his rage as friend and not in wisdom of his art, he tried to break it down and only broke his power on it. Then he went with sword into the tower. But with his ebbing power he could cast one spell upon the dragon, to bound his evil sometimes with a man-shape, and to hold him to that tower save in leaving to defend it, and he could cast one spell upon the tower also, to keep the dragon from enlarging ever any of the openings thereof. And that meant, as wizards and many others know right well, that the dragon ought one day be squeezed to death within his tower or be forced to perch for all his life upon the tower's top, parted forever from the treasure kept inside. For dragons grow ever as they age, and a dragon would never keep his hoard out in the open air.

The wizard who had been friend of the castle's lord made both of these enchantments as he went through tower's door. But his power could not keep the dragon from taking on in man-shape the likeness of that lord whom dragon had there slain, or from making one more lack in the spells that hemmed him in. For

there was an escape in evil from the magic which bound his power and made the tower hold him, and dragon desperate and devious could not be held from doing his own deeds in use thereof. And in the tower the dragon slew that wizard and ate his flesh. But he let fall from his mouth the wizard's birthstone, which was a gem of great worth, and put it in his hoard.

Now, the scroll told how the dragon might gain back all his power, and all his freedom therewith, but told it in a tongue both strange and little known, even to wizards, lest by chance the dragon come to gain that scroll. And the old wizard who had written it, said upon the scroll itself that chance might be the dragon knew not the charm to break the spell, and therefore was wizard loth take even small risk that he might thereby help the dragon. But the scroll said the dragon already knew how to bypass the spell that made the tower's windows and doors and arrow-slits withstand his power to enlarge them.

On the scroll was a list of offspring of that wizard who had been slain by the dragon in the tower.

When all those things were written down, the scroll told further tale of the dragon and his doings. It said that in the likeness of the tower's rightful lord, the dragon ruled that lord's domain, and told those vassals whom he had not killed,

that he had done battle with a sorcerer who in defeat had put a spell on him. He told them, since they had heard of the plundering he did at first, that the early strength of the curse had worn away but that the rest of it would last, for him or for his heirs, until it might be broken for him. And he told his vassals also that he would thenceforward take the dragon-name of Enfarg (which was not the dragon's own and secret name but one whereby he had let himself sometimes be known) for sorrow of his state.

The dragon kept most of his vassals and serfs outside the waste which he had made and could not mend, but kept some few within it and within the tower, for he said his power could safeguard so many, if they and their children never left, from any evil enchantment which might linger there. Food and goods and furnishings were brought to the edge of the waste by those in the outer part of his domain, and were brought to him by his tower-servants. And he said he was ashamed to be seen outside his tower. Now and again maidens were somehow brought to the tower, so said the scroll, but it seemed that he ate those, down among the tower's roots, and got no other good from them. And he had kept one with him now long time, and would not let her leave. The scroll said it might be that he kept this one as a curiosity, or mayhap in waiting for a day when he would



much want taste of maiden flesh and no other would be to hand, as this one seemed not to spoil through age.

Some time after he became the tower's lord, Enfarg had his servants tell his vassals of the domain outside, that he had taken a woman to his bed and got an heir of her, and that the heir had taken the curse which Enfarg had borne. When thereafter men sometimes saw the dragon flying over, they thought that that was Enfarg's son. Enfarg made up lies about this fleshless heir of his, for his women servants to tell such other women as they met at edge of waste. For none of his servants dared forbear the telling of his lies for him, and sometimes, when he had most need of what seemed honesty, they would not know they lied.

When it was somewhat past the time that the true lord of the tower should have died of his old age, Enfarg gave out the tale that he had died and that his son, who also bore that name, was ruling after him. But as more time passed, he gan fear that he would grow too large to leave the tower, though he grew not as fast as many dragons do, and he did in truth take a woman to himself and get a son of her. And he named the son Osgern.

The wizard who wrote the scroll did upon it much learned guessing anent this change of name. He said, among much else, that it might mean that Osgern was

the dragon's own secret name, for if that name were spoken in the breaking of the spell which kept the man-shape on him, by the one who broke the spell, then the dragon-evil and his power would be enlarged threefold. Therefore himseemed the dragon might know the way to break the spell, the wizard said. And there was much more of learned guesses that need not be here told.

The scroll told also of knights who had gone to the Dark Tower, and of what had there befallen them.

Now there was in those days a young man in a kingdom northeast of Logris, who as a boy had dreamed of being knighted but whose father had apprenticed him to wizardry, which also was mayhap no easy deed for shoemaker. And he became early in his life a master of the art which had been chosen for him.

This younger wizard learned much both of lore which older men passed on by word of mouth and of knowledge which had been written down. But it liked him better to learn that knowledge which had been written down. And for sake of his early, idle longing he much bent his work to making of spells and learning of lore best suited for helping those knights whose sense of duty called them to questing perilous and strange. He spoke oft and much with travellers, and studied scrolls that dealt with knightly deeds, and where he could he put together parts of

knowledge which thitherto had not been joined, to make new lore of causes and the quests which therefrom followed.

One scroll which this young wizard read was the Scroll of the Lore of the Quest for Alyson, which was kept by a lesser sage in a kingdom west of Logris, whence Alyson had been taken many years ago. And another that he read was the Scroll of the Lore of Enfarg Manflesh. For one day his father brought that scroll, on a visit to the younger wizard's master, and put it in his hand and bade him read it when he was one-and-thirty years of age. And that the young wizard did, and he learned therefrom that the wizard whom the dragon slew was one of his own forefathers. But he did not know the tongue wherein was told the way whereby the dragon could break the spell that kept the man-shape on it and the spell which held it to the tower, though himseemed that he should somehow know the meaning of those words. But he was not much minded to know how might the dragon help itself, but wanted rather to learn how he might hurt the dragon. And that much he quickly learned, for he was skilled at gaining lore. And he learned that if he should assail the dragon quickly with great magic as soon as it put on the dragon-shape in leaving likeness of a man, he could slay it speedily. For such was the power of any offspring of him who set the bound upon the dragon's evil.

But if he should assail the dragon too late after the taking of true shape, the dragon could slay him despite the magic. And while the dragon was in man-shape, the wizards of that line of men could not by magic harm him.

Now, the scroll which had been given the younger wizard told not how one might find the Tower of Enfarg. But when he read that scroll, the wizard called to mind at once what he had read in the Scroll of the Lore of the Quest for Alyson, and himseemed that the both of these did tell, each in its own way, of the same things befallen. He was minded then to take the quest of Alyson, in part, upon himself. He garnered many tales of travellers, and heard stories that the ravens told among themselves. For wizards have many ways of gaining lore. And he learned that one knight only now was known to seek the lady Alyson, though it was said that there were some who sought the Tower Dark for other ends.

Therefore he went by magic one dark evening to where that knight, hight Roland, lay asleep. He put a spell upon Sir Roland so that if ever the knight should come near the end of quest, the wizard would know of it in time to be there with him.

For the wizard had not time to spare on travelling with Roland, or on searching of his own, but needed his hours for bending all his mind on wizardry.

Now, Roland came not long thereafter to the land which Osgern Dragonheart

was ruling. And on the day that Roland asked a pedlar the way to Osgern's castle, the wizard went also to that land and went before him and lay in the guise of an old and crippled beggar at the crossroads where began the last way to Osgern's waste. For when he came unto that land, his magic soon found out the dragon-waste. And when Roland came and sought to know the way, he showed it unto him. And he heard that the knight did ask of him the way to Osgern's castle, and not to Tower Dark, but he doubted not that Roland would seek Dark Tower soon enough after putting feet upon the dragon-waste. And the wizard followed, with a spell upon himself to keep him unseen by any, even Osgern, some way behind Sir Roland. For he wanted not the knight to know that he was there, lest even shame should help Sir Roland to withstand the drawing-power of the dragon's hoard.

Now, the wizard made also then a magic that would make him able send a shout to ears of one man only. For once he was within the dragon-waste he would be able work no magic save enchantment for slaying Osgern in his dragon-shape. But his power was already such that it would feel the change of Osgern into dragon-shape, while the both of them were in the waste. And he sent a raven ahead of him, while Roland was upon the waste, to bring him word from Osgern's tower.

When Sir Roland had got well upon the waste, the wizard also went upon it, following Sir Roland. For the force of Osgern's power in his man-shape would be bent upon the knight and thus not like to wake unto the coming of a wizard until his shape was changed or he had slain the knight by dastardy or prowess. But if Osgern in man-shape slew the knight and chose to face the wizard in man-shape still, the wizard would have no defence against him. For he was no match in trial of arms for Osgern in his man-shape. And when Osgern was ware of his being there, the spell that he had made might hide him no longer.

As they walked across the waste, the raven came back to the wizard and passed close above him without stopping, and its coming put some dread upon the knight, and the wizard was made to know, by the subtle sign-making of ravenkind, that Osgern had a maiden with him in the tower. And he was made to know what Osgern was minded to do with the maiden when he had slain Sir Roland. But the wizard felt not this matter greatly, as there was more at stake, himseemed, than the well-being of one maiden. For he was in stern mood as then.

Now, when the wizard saw that Roland would not seek the dragon's hoard or lordship of that land, he thought that both of them would die and his forefather's slaying would still be unavenged, and Osgern might one day gain back his power

or even have it back threefold. He gan run, that he might whisper in Roland's ear the goal that he should seek. For in his haste that stopped him from attending well to plight of maiden in the tower, he forgot the spell that he had worked before. And in his haste, he tripped and fell, and cut his right hand upon sharp rock, a broken piece of the old castle's wall. He quickly filled the cut with dust, and quickly also covered his blood upon the ground, lest Osgern Dragonheart should smell it. But the cutting of his hand put back into his mind the forgotten meaning of those strange words which were upon the scroll of lore.

For when he was small and very young, he had cut his hand upon a rock, and the sight of the blood had frightened him and he had feared great evil. And his mother had put him in his father's bed that night, so that he might feel safe, and his father had said those words in sleep which were upon the scroll, and had said the meaning of them, and that had seemed the evil that the boy had feared, and his mind had therefore put it from his knowledge.

When the wizard upon the ground remembered all of this, he knew that Alyson might of her own will bear offspring of Osgern's dragon-shape, and he knew what would be in the world when that offspring had hatched. He was minded then of the spell which he had worked before, and he made to shout to Roland, but his

mouth was choked with dust. While he was trying to rid his mouth of that, he heard Sir Roland wind his horn. The door of the tower opened then, and a man in armour came therefrom.

*Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came.*



THE TALE OF THE DARK TOWER  
PART IV: HOW THE QUEST ENDED

While the notes of Roland's horn sounded about the tower, the dusk upon the place that evening changed to a fell twilight that looked to the young wizard as if it would not lessen until the fight that was to come had ended.

There was no need for parley. Osgern moved as one who meant at once to kill, and Roland was reminded of reptiles he had seen.

Osgern Dragonheart came down the steps bearing in right hand a battleaxe, just taken from where it always hung inside the door. He wore a sword and bore a shield, and he was covered in scale armour, save for his head, which bore a helm with narrow eye-slits. Roland wore for armour but a hauberk short, that was both light and strong, which a prince had given him long ago, and a light helmet, which covered not the face. Roland had his shield still slung upon his back, and he took

in both his hands the spear which for a while that day had served him for a staff.

Then Osgern had some doubt about the battle's outcome, for him seemed the other knight was wise in wielding of weapon against wearer of scale armour. That led him step forward from the tower's side, to show that he was not afraid.

The wizard sat where he was, unseen, to watch the combat. He would not go behind the wearer of the man-shape, lest Osgern sense a bodily attack or, catching sight of moving stone or dust, become aware of magic's use. Also, he feared that if he bent his will to bodily endeavour, he might miss chance to use the spell of dragon-death when might the dragon gain again his own true shape.

The lady on the tower and the wizard on the ground saw then Sir Roland hold his spear aslant, with point toward the ground, and go toward the Dragonheart, who held his axe-helve near the head and bore his shield before him. His right shoulder was not covered by the shield and Roland thereat feigned hard a thrust, then lowered point again at Osgern's thigh, where it might pass between the sides of scales, while Osgern warded with his shield and struck in vain a short chop for the spear-shaft. But Osgern warded main thrust also with his shield, and struck again as point stuck in the wood. But Roland drew his weapon back before the stroke could cut.

Then followed fight that but a hardened warrior would well keep up. For fighting shieldless upon foot with spear against a man who hath both shield and one-hand weapon is very careful work and taketh skill and patience and some cunning. Many warriors might be loth to give up spear unbroken but might rather let their foeman catch and break it, that they might come to grips with him in fury, but after his long and toilsome journeying to reach this place, Roland would not lose this combat now from lack of patience. And Roland's cunning stinted not, nor did his courage falter. Sometimes he would strike, always upward, at chest or throat, when left unshielded, and sometimes at the thigh, turning his point in quick half-circles. And sometimes he tried trip his foe, when Osgern's feet were meetly placed, by thrusting shaft between the shins. But ever Osgern was too quick and got no harm. And ever Osgern tried get past the point of spear, to make the weapon harmless to him, but Roland was too skilful. But at the last, when Roland tried to trip him, Osgern caught the shaft, by bend and turn of legs, just long enough to cut quite through it.

Leaping backward lightly, Roland quickly drew his sword and quickly swung to-fore his shield, as Osgern stepped to keep from tripping over shaft between his shanks and heaved a stroke, grip-shifting, with his axe. And Roland dodged, and

axe-edge went into ground, and Roland struck at haft with sword. But Osgern stepped his left foot forward and covered axe with shield, then pushed with shield and drew the axe-blade up again as Roland backward stepped. Then fell they to with fury. And Roland sought move close to make upward drawing strokes against the underside of scales, or upward thrust his point, and Osgern tried to stand apart and wield his axe with strength.

Thus for a time they fought with axe and sword, until Sir Roland lured his foe so that he struck a mighty downward stroke, at head or shoulder, which Roland caught upon the rim of shield flung quickly up. And the shieldrim was against the haft of axe, so that Osgern could not at once withdraw it, as he had not time for turning hand ere Roland swiftly struck, as axe was caught, at Osgern's arm, where under-edge of scale was turned toward him. But Osgern had snatched back his hand and let the weapon fall on Roland's side of shield, to cumber him, and backward leapt to draw his sword. Roland turned his shield to make the axe to fall aside, and he let Osgern draw his blade.

Now, until that time no wounds were given, which indeed seemeth passing strange, but soon after they gan both to fight with each his sword, Roland got a wound. For still he used his steady way against wearer of scale armour, while

Osgern struck with strength at Roland's well-worn mail.

Osgern kept on hewing how he would, and he made some few more wounds on Roland's body, though none of them were mortal, for he fought with serpentlike shifts of arm and sword, which Roland might not always ward. And these wounds and the heavy work of battle made Roland weary, so that he was more slow than Osgern, though Osgern now was weary also. And he got more wounds, and one of them was sore, and himseemed the combat then was like to go against him, though his courage faltered not.

Now, Alyson had watched the knight, but had not let him see her, for in her prisoning she had learned great wariness and she had not been sure he was indeed a rescuer. But she now bethought her that he could scarce be worse than Osgern, and she wanted much that Osgern not win the combat and return. And as she thought that Osgern fought not with lust of battle only, but for lust of body also, she thought it might be well to give his foeman like encouragement, and she called out to Roland, "Slay me that ravisher, Sir Knight!"

And the sound of that voice was good to him, and Roland struck a sudden downward stroke, that Osgern warded not, for he had not expected it. Roland's sword cut cleanly through the scales on Osgern's shoulder, and through the

gambeson, but no blood ran, and Osgern felt no wound, though yet he felt a heavy blow upon his shoulder. And the wizard said a word unto himself, which none could hear, and the word was “Cleavescale”, and he smiled an unseen smile, the first time since combat had begun. But Roland’s wits in battle were as sharp as his sword’s edge, and he snatched back the blade and struck again a downward stroke, ere Osgern quite recovered, that slashed his point along the chest on Osgern’s right side unguarded. And the point cut cleanly through the scales and through the gambeson, and Osgern felt it move upon him, but still he got no wound from it, and no blood ran. And the wizard said unto himself, “Cleavescale indeed,” and rubbed his unseen hands together, but then watched warily, lest Roland die, or dragonhood forth be drawn.

Now was Roland wroth. Quoth he, “I’ll hack thine armour from thee, knave, and part thy paunch with fingernails.” But in truth he meant to strangle foe, if sword did not the work he meant for it. And Osgern laughed a merry, loathsome laugh, but Roland ran at him savagely, warding with great speed and striking with much fury. And where he struck was ever armour cut, so that soon were many rents in Osgern’s fine scale armour. But when he had a chance, and soon he made it for himself, he smote again where he had cut the first stroke downward, and in

that smiting he clove Osgern from the shoulder to first rib over breastbone. And there flowed no lack of blood. And the wizard said unto himself, "Aha!", but Alyson upon the tower cried out, for Osgern had been in her life so long. But then she was much lighter, and herseemed her wits might serve to deal right well with that strange knight if he should prove not rescuer indeed. And as Osgern's body forward fell, Roland smote off the head of it, for he was not sure what manner of foeman he had slain.

The fell twilight now was changed to a pleasant gloaming, and the wizard saw that one corner of a stone high in the tower wall had turned back to grey from dungish brown. Roland leaned upon his sword and watched the tower warily. But servants thereof came out to him and kneeled, and begged him be their master. But then the wizard let himself be seen, as he stood not far from Roland, and he said sternly to him, "Command them not, for they bear taint of sorcery and are safely ruled by magic only." The wizard looked then into the tower without moving whence he stood, and said in a loud voice, "Come out." And one who had stayed within came forth and kneeled and cowered before the wizard. It seemed as if he would not lift his head, but still his head was lifted, and the wizard looked into his eyes and said, "Take the little stone that is under the second toe of thy

right foot, and go and strike the lady’s fetter with it twice. And when thou goest, take with thee the best tool thou soon canst find, for getting out that fetter-spike that sticketh into wall. No matter what thy master thought, that is no fit place for fetterspikes. And see thou turnest not away again until that spike be out. But damage wall no more than thou canst help.” The man went to do what he was bidden. And the wizard later said that that man had meant to harm the lady. But now he said to Roland, who was still leaning on his sword and breathing mightily, “Harsh mastery is theirs until they own their souls again.” For the servants of the tower hated him who fought the one whom they had obeyed from fear.

Then the wizard said to Roland, “How came ye by Cleavescale?”

Roland said, “This sword, mean you?”

The wizard answered: “Aye. See where the blood hath gathered in the name-runes. Careful wiping be needed there, I need not tell ye. He is a noted dragon-slayer. How came ye by it?”

Roland answered, “In a tavern brawl, not of my making. My blade was broken, but I slew my foe withal, and took his blade, and put my hilt and pommel on it. How that other man gained such a sword, I know not.”

Said the wizard, “That was well done of ye. Had the weapon been as it was



made, Osgern likely had put on his dragon-shape as it came nigh, and I had spoiled your combat by killing him with magic.” But Roland was thinking of how he gained the blade he held, and he said slowly, “Now call I back the curse I put upon his slimy soul. For a goodly blade it was, that sword of mine he broke.” But now Alyson was at the tower door and would have come down the steps, but the wizard waved that she should stay, and he said, “My lady, we would have your welcome at the door. Stay until we come to ye, as is most right.” And Roland would have asked him who he was and what he did there, but the young wizard by his manner let him know that all such questions would be answered at a fitting time. And Roland deemed that man worthy of great trust. They waited there till Roland was somewhat rested, and the wizard bade servants bring torches, and a cloak for Roland, and they went unto the tower steps. And there the wizard stopped, and he stood somewhat apart from Roland. And Alyson saw that here were two men who were both good and strong. And she saw that the wizard could be powerful in evil if he should thereto bend his will.

Then the wizard said, so that the both of them could hear him well, “I am lord of this domain by birth, and ye are lord by right of conquest, and this damsel is its lady by right of mastery and suffering and of guidance to its folk. How shall these

divers claims be settled?”

Roland said: “This damned Dark Tower hath haunted every step I took in manhood. Take it, lord, and welcome, so the lady may go where she will. Who wanteth the place may have it. But would ye halt her steps to any place?” And he smiled and lightly put his hand upon his sword.

The wizard smiled and said: “Not I. Nor place have I as lord of any castle. Wizards must rede and lords must act. Now pardon me for making ye decide this thing so soon, but your wounds need tending, Roland, and such a choice must not be made within such tower’s walls. This domain now needeth both lady and lord, and if ye will not both have this work, then must there soon be seeking elsewhere for one or both of these. The evil that is throughout the tower is being drawn back upon the dragon’s hoard that is down near the tower’s roots. That hoard must not be touched save in giving parts thereof back to rightful owners. And methinks that only rightful owners will ever claim but parts thereof. Many will come for all of it, and some of these will doubtless kill others of them without threat to ye. But the treasure should not leave the place except to rightful owners, lest the evil of the hoard be spread abroad. Ye both have borne this tower’s burden nearly all your lives, and if it suddenly be lifted now, your feet might leave the ground.

Besides, who else should bear it now? What say ye, Sir Roland, would ye share a fair domain with this fair lady?"

Roland said: "That part of what ye ask is more than I had thought about for many years. But if the lady be willing that we should share together what we have borne apart so long, right gladly would I stay."

Now Alyson saw that Roland was tempered well in mind and soul, and she had seen that he was vigorous, when whole, of body, so that few men might suit her better. She said as he looked up, "With a right good heart, Lord Roland, will I keep this place with thee."

The wizard looked round upon the servants and then said to Roland, "Have ye any errands, lord?"

Roland said: "I left my steed beyond the waste, and a sumpter horse in that last village. I would have them here, as meseemeth this is to be a fitter place for man and beast than it erst hath been."

The wizard said to a servant: "Go and fetch his lordship's horses. But say only that they are wanted at the tower." And he said to another: "Find us wholesome food, such as the lady eateth, and good wine. Thy lord hath wounds in need of tending, and we have much to tell each other and would not do it hungry."

As the knight and wizard went up the steps to where the lady waited, they heard above their heads the sound of nasty servant working hard on stubborn fetter-spike.

*Childe Roland in a Fair Tower dwelled.*

BOOK II

THE HOLDING OF THE FAIR TOWER

PART I: THE ENTERING OF THE TOWER

Roland, Alyson, and the young wizard went up the tower stairs, but they went slowly up, for Roland’s wounds were sore and much blood had been shed therefrom. The outer stairs went up the tower wall about the height of a tall man’s head, then opened they into a passage short that led unto a winding stair within the thickness of the wall. And that stair opened, through a second passage, upon the second floor of tower over short. And as they came unto that passage, Alyson did say, “There is one serving-maid who came not out with all the other servants.” But the wizard said, “Then is she dead or swooning, or mayhap asleep, for none awake might withstand the calling that I made to them. But if harm ye fear, let me go first.”

“And the harm be not from sorcery, it were best that I be first,” quoth Roland, and he stood straight, and by way of jest he turned his shield tofore, and strode into that half of tower storey which served as the great hall. He saw a fair young woman lying on the floor near to the window that was closest on his right side. He went to her and saw that she was breathing but was moveless and had no weapon near, then stept he aside as Alyson came to them with the wizard.

“She hath swooned,” said Alyson, and said then, “She sleepeth in back chamber on the left.” For that storey of the tower was made in this wise: that half of storey which was to left of door where they came in was made up of four rooms, of wooden building, with a hallway between each pair of them, with window at end of hallway. And the rooms at the hither end of hall had therefore each three straight wooden walls and a curving wall of stone, and the rooms behind had each two straight walls and a curving. And Alyson had the room that was across from the serving-women’s, and Osgern had used the other room upon that side. The chamber across from Osgern’s was that of the men servants. The wizard told one of the knaves, who had come in behind them as he had ordered, to bear the swooning young woman to her room and to return when he had put her upon her bed.

As the servant went to do the wizard’s bidding, Alyson led Roland and the wizard to Osgern’s room, that Roland might be eased of his wounding, and on the way she said to them, “That maid is called Gathina, with whom Osgern toyed oft, without bedding her. He used to say to me that it was like that she was not so maidenly in soul as in body, because of her eagerness to please him. But her he told that if I broke by lying with him the spell that held his body, he would forsake me and make her his lady fitly wed. She told me that one time in scorn, but I showed him not that I knew thereof. But I forget me; know ye aught of my plight within this tower these past sixteen and hundred years?”

“I knew of plight but not its purpose,” Roland said.

“And I knew its purpose,” said the wizard. “It was to forestall that purpose rather than to rescue ye that I came hither. This goodly knight, however, had your safety in his heart. But there will be time for talk when his great need is met.”

And he and the lady helped Sir Roland do off his hauberk, and then the lady left and the wizard helped Sir Roland do off his gambeson and tunic, and to lie at rest in Osgern’s bed, after he had cast a cleansing spell on bed and chamber to take away what taint might yet remain of dragonhood. Then the wizard asked whether Roland would be healed by magic or by nature. For he said that magic worketh

swiftly, but healing by nature doth strengthen body. Roland said he would let his body heal itself, unless need were sudden of healing sooner. So the wizard made search of Roland's wounds and cleansed them and bound them up, and then he asked Sir Roland whether food or sleep would like him most. Roland said that sleep was then more nigh his need, and he slept. And the wizard went and made command to servants for doing of divers tasks and made them to be drowsy when they had finished what was needed, that they might not mischief make but sleep throughout the night while he himself was resting. And he cast another spell upon Gathina, that she might not wake till morning. Then he sat at table with Alyson, and they supped sparingly, for they deemed it not meet that they eat and drink their fill while knight with greater need could not partake. And as they deemed it fitting that all three share together the tales that to them all pertained, the wizard told the lady much about the working of magic, and she told him of curious doings that had befallen among Osgern's folk that were without the waste, that she had been told of in their seeking rede from her. And after sitting late, they went to bed, the wizard sleeping in Roland's room and the lady, right joyful for first time in many years, in her own. And all slept well till morn.

In the morning, Sir Roland woke with hunger keen, and glad was he when



Alyson came to him with bread and meat and wine, and he broke his fast most eagerly, leaning against piled pillows, while lady and wizard also ate. And when they had done eating, each told others of the haps that had brought all three to downfall of Osgern Dragonheart. Much did Alyson marvel when she was told of Merlin’s spell that had kept her safe without her knowing aught thereof. “That dastard then could not have ravished me,” said she. “Well was it that I was minded to withstand with all my might.”

“Methinks it might seemed meet that you had married Osgern,” Roland said. “Had ye offered that, it would have been fair test of his good will.”

“Himself spoke not of wedding,” quoth Alyson. “I needed not offer for what he ought have sued.”

“Well spoken,” quoth wizard, who in telling of his tale had bidden them call him Kenduar. For his full name was Elenkendar, but wizards like not widely known their full names. Then turned the talk to lesser things, and in the midst thereof the wizard raised his hand and said, “Gathina waketh.” He bade them wait until she came to them, but made some signs with his right hand and said, “Small magics are cheap when no great danger be toward.” The door oped and Gathina came in bearing a dagger and made to run at Roland for to stab him, but was

stopped at three feet from the bed by that small magic which Kenduar had made.

Then was she more wroth, and said to Roland, “Ah, verily thou hadst this necromancer’s aid in murdering my fair lord. He was far too able a warrior than that thou shouldst best him in fair combat.”

Kenduar then said to her, “Tis true I am a wizard, and true that I came hither for to slay thy lord by wizardry. But this good knight did best him without any help from me.” And he told her the truth about the Dragonheart, but she would not believe it, and she said, “I’ll not allow, if I can hinder it, this witch’s giving of herself to this foul murderer, she that denied my lord the small boon he did ask of her. Ye had better send me hence, for ye shall have no peace of me within these walls unless ye kill me here.” For she wanted to be free of the tower, that she might raise against Sir Roland and his lady the knights whom Osgern had not seen but whose allegiance he had had.

“Thou shalt go hence when I shall let thee,” said Kenduar. “Until I do, thou shalt be prisoner within the chamber whence thou camest. Wilt thou go of thine own will, or must force be put upon thee?”

Gathina wanted not constraint of magic put upon her limbs, and so she turned and went unto her chamber and had it locked behind her. For she felt she might

have better hope escape through door kept closed with lock and key, than through one warded with magic. And Kenduar commanded one of the men servants to keep the key and open door for women when they went to sleep, or to bring food unto Gathina, and to lock it when they left. And he put great fear upon that man, that he might not neglect that duty.

When the man had left the chamber, Kenduar did say, “There is another thing that beareth thought, and that is Merlin’s reason for having done unto ye as he did. Easy would it have been for him to rescue ye when ye were being taken, but he cast instead a spell to keep ye young and free from harm for many years, a spell that oft may not be made without great evil. It may have been that the saving of Roland’s soul would need a quest that lasted long, so it may have been for Roland’s sake that he ordained the quest, but meseemeth there must lie behind the questing some cause more hidden. For ever was Merlin’s planning deep and guileful, as the masters of lore do tell, and most oft indeed had his magics great purpose behind. I shall consult the masters when matters of this domain give time. But methinks these matters may well pertain to Merlin’s devising, so it will be well that I leave it not too long.”

In that morning came back he that had been sent for Roland’s steed and

sumpter horse, and he brought them. He said the villagers had been astonished at his being allowed to leave the tower waste, and they had found it strange that the horses should be sought by torchlight and by moonlight. But he, as he had been commanded, had said naught but that the horses were wanted at the tower. He said he deemed they thought the knight Sir Roland had been defeated and that Osgern now wanted horseflesh for feeding of himself in dragon-shape. Then Kenduar commanded others of the knaves to go unto the village and have wood and other things needful brought unto the waste for making of a stable for the horses. And he commanded that they say naught of how matters stood within the tower waste or at the tower. The knaves were glad of chance for leaving waste, and went right lightly to do as they were bidden. And in the next few days the stable was builded, and Roland's steed Hodron and his sumpter horse were sheltered there. And Roland rested and his wounds gan heal, while Alyson and Kenduar talked oft with him. And Alyson oftimes played upon the harp for their delight, as she said she had been wont to do for Enfarg but not for Osgern. And one day Kenduar asked her, "Might ye make the harp, think you, sing song in praise of wine and music?" She said she thought she might, for she loved well the both of these, and he said, "Do ye make ready then such song, I pray you, that ye

may play it when I ask.”

During those days the dung-brown faded utterly from the tower walls, leaving them a clean and healthy grey. And flowers gan grow about the waste near tower walls, which now was fair and was not dark as erst.

When Roland had rested a few days and was beginning to feel hale again, he said one day to Kenduar, “What of my taking up the lordship of this tower? Needeth that not the agreement of Osgern’s vassals?”

Kendar said, “The knights of Clombendorn hold not their lands from lord of Ordilans, as vassals do in other countries, but hold their lands of themselves and have by custom held the owners of Ordilans, who be of noble birth, as their chiefs of the domain. Lordship of Ordilans hangeth not upon a holding of the lordship of Clombendorn. I myself own Ordilans and so may give it unto you – if the knights of Clombendorn assent that I am rightful owner. For I must consent be judged by them in that, and ye must by them be judged in Osgern’s slaying. When ye are hale enough to appeal to trial by combat, if it should come to that, we shall summon the knights of Clombendorn to Ordilans for judgement council. If the judgement go against us and they allow not trial by combat, fearing magic aid to you by me, or if, denying right of judgement, they try to seize us suddenly, I can

take us swiftly out of here to safety, but that would leave the hoard of Osgern to power of men who have not strength for withstanding of its evil, and we may need bring war against them when we can. But if they choose to hear us, methinks they will believe.” And he touched with the ring finger of his left hand a golden ring upon right hand, that had in it a stone which shone like wine, of reddish brown.

*Childe Roland in a Fair Tower waited.*

THE HOLDING OF THE FAIR TOWER  
PART II: THE SUMMONING OF RODOAN

The domain that had been Osgern Dragonheart's held fourteen manors that were the holdings of fourteen knights, and the village nearest the tower waste was called Gorumdal, and the knight who held it and the other villages of that manor was called Rodoan the Just, who had taken upon himself, from urging of his fellows, the duties of the lordship that Osgern largely had otherwise left undone. Indeed, they would have had him for their lord outright but that they feared the doom they thought would fall from Osgern of the Dragon Curse.

Now, when the servant that Kenduar had sent for Roland's horses had left for the tower, and when others had borne back wood for his horses' stabling, Rodoan soon heard of it, and he deemed that Osgern had been delivered of the curse that had been said to bind him, and was become good friend to folk outside the waste.

For the only one whom Rodoan had ever known to go upon the waste and leave it thereafter, as if it were but manor of ordinary man, was the pedlar Gisdan, and Gisdan’s doing thus was passing strange to Rodoan and other folk. But never had they asked Gisdan anent that marvel, for they deemed a lack of knowledge of that tower might be no ill lack.

After Roland’s horses had been gone for seventeen days, a servant from the tower brought to Rodoan a message. That letter said, “The usurper of Ordilans is overthrown and slain, and the long-lost heir of Ordilans hath come back to claim his own. The knights of Clombendorn are bidden come to Ordilans that rightful disposition may be made of this domain.” And it bade them gather at the tower a week thence, for it said that duty kept at tower the heir of Ordilans, that he might not come to them for judgement.

Rodoan showed the letter to Imduë, who was his counsellor and chief among the counsellors of Clombendorn. Imduë said to him, “See you, it beareth seal of harp and cup, the ancient seal of Ordilans, which Osgern never used. It was said of old that none but rightful heir of Ordilans could safely wear that ring. But have not our sires and grandsires ever deemed the holder of the tower, whom they knew, to be the rightful lord? This matter will bear much questioning. It may be



that this Kenduar who claimeth to be lord of Ordilans doth not truly wear the ring but only useth it. My rede is that we go at once, lest ring-user be sorcerer who needeth time to make dire magic ready for our coming. For I deem that none but sorcerer or wizard could overthrow the fell wight that Osgern was unwillingly.”

But Rodoan said, “This Kenduar soundeth upon paper like one who will bear fair judgement, even though it go against him. It is likely that he giveth us time for thought before we hear him. If he be sorcerer in malice, he would not expect men to consent to wait as bidden, but would be ready catch us unaware in seeking to surprise him.”

Imduë smiled and said, “Which of us be lord and which the counsellor? Let it be, then, as ye and he have said. We shall seek make the other knights thus see the matter.” And Rodoan sent letters to his fellows, telling them of message he had got and setting forth the reasoning which he and Imduë had made, and he asked of them that all might meet, three days hence, at the hall of Sir Reltur, of the manor called Dirmend, which was the manor nearest unto centre of Clombendorn and therefore used most oft as meeting-place of Osgern’s knights, if they desired debate of what was sought. And Imduë and Rodoan gave thought to what they might commend unto the other knights as to disposing of the lordship of

Clombendorn. And Imduë said, "Methinks the knights of our dead lord had rather have ye as lord to come, than this stranger that claimeth heirship of Ordilans. It might be meet to let him keep the tower holding which may indeed be his by right, and let the lordship of the domain at large fall outside that holding. For now that the lord be dead, it is the right of his knights to reckon whom to have as their new lord."

"Seek I not the lordship," quoth Sir Rodoan. "The cares of second in command be burdensome enow, and glad shall I be if some new lord will give that burden to another, though ablings I bore it none so ill, as meseemeth my fellows deem. But I am content to let the lord of Ordilans be lord of all of Clombendorn, and he be willing to keep the laws and customs to which we have agreed."

"That is the rede that I would give to ye and I were to be self-minded," said Imduë. "I am content that I be counsellor to second in command, though meseemeth that burden may be lighter than hath been, for doubtless the new lord, and we do let him be so, will take more unto himself the duties of the lordship than did Lord Osgern. And doubtless he will have counsellor of his own."

"And he do not, I shall commend ye to him," said Rodoan. "Ye are worthy for to counsel lord of large domain."

“I’d rather counsel ye than any king,” said Imduë. “Unless that ye were king.”

“Would ye have me seek to overthrow King Cordimas?” then asked Rodoan.

“He may seek to be our king ere long, if fear of cursed Osgern be lifted from him now. I hope our new lord will have might for to withstand him and he doth, for the manner of his kingship liketh me not at all.” Now, Cordimas was king of Dormondinal, a neighbour country.

“The only kin of Ordilans whom my lore doth record was a great wizard,” quoth Imduë. “But his house was fallen many years ago, from some great overthrow the cause whereof hath been from that lore kept hidden, that did hap about the time the curse was put on Enfarg. This Kenduar might be offspring of that wizard, if the wizard did have offspring, as I believe few wizards do. Though how the offspring of a younger kinsman could call Lord Angoren, that took the name of Enfarg, a usurper, I see not.”

“We shall see how he upholdeth claim,” said Rodoan. “There may be much that lieth hidden in the lore of Ordilans, and it may be that Angoren or a forefather of him had taken unrightfully the lordship in a time before the curse. We shall give Kenduar fair hearing and then take him as our lord, if the other knights do take my rede, or condemn him as kin-slaying robber – if he indeed be kin to Ordilans.

Thus shall I rede my fellows. But much will turn, methinks, on what the lady Alyson doth say of Osgern and of Kenduar.”

“Ye deem her true?” said Imduë.

“I deem her true. None but a lady of noble soul would thus refuse the love of lords with whom she had to live, even if her taking them were but attempt gain trust and freedom to escape. One who beareth what she hath borne can only be noble-hearted. Though many deem that her long living cometh of causes that be evil.”

“That long living raiseth questions in my mind,” said Imduë.

That night as Rodoan and his lady lay abed, Lady Ondima, who had listened well, without speech, to that talk of Rodoan and Imduë, did say to him, “My lord, ye do put great store by the word, methinks, of this strange lady Alyson.”

He said: “Wise hath her rede been to the folk of this domain who sought it of her. Ye know thereof. And good hath been her rede to me, upon a time that I remember well.”

“Ye did seek rede of her?”

“Aye. ‘Twas when I was torn, in my youth, ‘twixt thee and Lady Sethlinia—”

“Torn, wert thou?” said Ondima, in tones curious and stern.

“Aye. I never told thee. I’d always loved thee as a friend and eke had found thee comely and worthy well of bodily desire. But never did I feel for thee, afore our marriage, the passion Sethlinia did inspire. I was enamoured of her, not thee. But thou and I had understood that we would marry, though no betrothal yet was made, and I was loth to hurt thee, though much did I desire to have Sethlinia. So I sent a letter to Lady Alyson, to ask whether desire or friendship counteth most in marriage, and she did write to me that friends make ever fairest partners in any worthwhile venture, but passion is a thing that passeth. And so I wed my friend, and on my wedding night I was enamoured of her and have loved her truly ever since.”

“Whatever doth befall this Kenduar, thou must preserve that lady,” quoth Lady Ondima as she embraced her husband.

*Childe Roland in a Fair Tower waited.*

THE HOLDING OF THE FAIR TOWER

PART III: THE SUMMONING OF DORLIMUS

Sir Dorlimus, holder of the manor called Tirione, was riding with some men-at-arms in the forest near his manor house, when came the messenger from Rodoan with a letter telling him of the message Sir Rodoan had got. “Tell your master I shall be at Reltur’s,” he said unto the messenger. Then rode he slowly home, thinking of all that this might mean for him. For Dorlimus had been eager to replace Sir Rodoan as second in command of Clombendorn, though he bore to Rodoan no ill-will. It was only that he thought that pride of place might go more fitly unto seeker thereof than to a man who sought not honours for himself, and he knew that Sir Rodoan sought them not. So he was minded to seek the favour of him who sought the lordship now of Ordilans and, he doubted not, of Clombendorn Domain, that the new lord might choose a new second in command.

And he was minded to uphold therefore this new claimant to the lordship, that the new claimant might be chosen over Rodoan, whom he deemed most of their fellows would put forth for lordship if the self-styled heir to Ordilans should be rejected. And then, Sir Dorlimus knew, he would have good chance of being second in command to Rodoan, for he had been second choice for place that Rodoan now held. But second in command to Rodoan, if Rodoan were lord, he would not be. Himseemed he should be set above Sir Rodoan, who was not ambitious as Sir Dorlimus deemed a knight should be. So he decided he would have Sir Nondolas, who was his crony, urge upon the other knights that Rodoan oppose this Kenduar for the taking of the lordship of Clombendorn. And he deemed that he would then uphold the self-styled heir to Ordilans and gain his favour over Rodoan. For he doubted not that that man who claimed kinship, if that claim should be upheld, would be accorded lordship, if that man's seeking of lordship were not attended by foul play, sithen it was custom, though not law, that lordship be passed through its inheritance. Then the thought came to Dorlimus that he was taking too lightly the chance that Kenduar's overthrowing of Lord Osgern had been foully done. And he resolved that, if it were so, he would oppose the claimant Kenduar, no matter what favour he might gain by upholding him, for

the one thing Sir Dorlimus deemed truly sacred, that he would uphold with his whole honour, was rightful ownership of land. And so resolved, he set his spurs to horse, and rode home merrily.

That night abed, he told his wife of his new plan, for she kept well her counsel with him, and was his chief advisor, in whom he trusted much.

“Your plan is good, my lord,” Sethlinia said to him. “But for one thing that might be, I rede ye follow it.”

“What thing is that?”

“It may be that the witch-woman Alyson is allied with Kenduar in his seeking of the lordship,” said Sethlinia. “If that be so, then must he and she be much opposed, for good of all of Clombendorn. It will not be well for our domain if she be made free lady thereof. Harm enough hath she done while bound to Osgern’s tower.”

“I have ever heard good words of her,” said Dorlimus. “And no ill of her from you, till now.”

“She hideth her ill-doing under words of so-called wisdom,” said Sethlinia. “Her praise is spoken by those to whom her help is given in gaining power over others. I know thereof, for I am one over whom such power once was sought, with



her ill aid.”

“Hast never told me this,” said Dorlimus.

“Have ever feared thy wrath against thy friend,” she said. “‘Twas not in spite of thee he sought my love. Thou and I were not betrothed then, though I deem he knew we would be soon and sought forestall us. ‘Twas Sir Rodoan. He was enamoured of me, and I was not enamoured of him but beginning to be so of thee, so he sought a love potion of Lady Alyson and nearly had me drink it. But I did see his eagerness to have me drink, and I did doubt his offering, and so I had my handmaid Meridila take the drink instead, and she was straightway assotted of him, though I feigned not to notice. And he, seeing what my handmaid felt for him, and that I would not have him, did take her to his bed most secretly and get a child on her. But she told me of it later. And I am therefore the only one who knoweth who the father was of Meridila’s child that she gave birth that time thou knowest of, that father she would not reveal.”

Dorlimus wondered much and was much wroth, both with Rodoan and with the lady Alyson, and therefore was resolved to be revenged upon them both, though it cost him the place that his ambition sought.

“If he be allied with her, he’ll not be lord of Clombendorn if I can hinder him

by any means,” quoth Dorlimus.

“‘Tis not enough that he be kept from lordship of Clombendorn,” said Sethlinia. “He must not be master of Ordilans at all, lest he give Alyson foothold in our domain, to debauch our friends for those who give her money.”

“I may not keep him from the land if he hath right to it,” said Dorlimus.

“Unhappy am I, that Rodoan might as well have had his will of,” quoth Sethlinia, as if she spake in jest. “For why should I be given to one man that loveth me not, and not unto another?” And she gan weep, but as if she tried to hide her weeping. Then was Sir Dorlimus sorely troubled.

*Childe Roland in a Fair Tower waited.*

THE HOLDING OF THE FAIR TOWER

PART IV: THE MEETING OF THE KNIGHTS

When all the knights of Clombendorn were met at Dirmend, Sir Rodoan said to them, “Ye have been told about the man hight Kenduar, who claimeth to have slain as usurper our lord Osgern and who asketh that we go to Osgern’s tower for to make a settlement anent the lordship of Ordilans – and eke, as meseemeth, lordship over all of Clombendorn. The letter that he sent to me to ask that that be done, doth bear, as ye see now, the seal of harp and cup, which Imduë doth tell me only rightful heir to Ordilans may safely wear as his.” He showed them then the letter, and he passed it round that they might look at it. “And, as ye know, Imduë is well learned in the lore of magic things. And he sayeth that Lord Angoren, that took the name of Enfarg when his curse was laid upon him, had a kinsman that was a wizard, whose family vanished in mystery about that time that

Angoren’s burden was laid upon him. And ye know that Imduë is well learned in the lore of the family of Angoren. So meseemeth there may well be justice in the claim of Kenduar.”

“It could be that this Kenduar weareth not the seal of harp and cup,” said then Sir Reltur. “All we know for sure is he hath used it. He might have put the ring on stick tight-fitting to help him hold it in using of the seal.”

“Lord Osgern, however, did never even use it thus,” said Rodoan. “The question that ariseth therefrom is whether he had it and wore it not, or whether he had it not. And if he had it not, why lacked it? Could it be that the curse which bound him took from him the right to Ordilans and right of ruling over Clombendorn? Is that why he had left so much ruling unto me whom ye had chosen? The matter beareth careful thought, without making of choice ere we have heard the claims of Kenduar from his own mouth. And we will do well to hear what Lady Alyson doth say of Kenduar, who hath been so long our lord’s love-prisoner.”

“To hear her, ay, and to believe right counter to what she sayeth,” quoth Sir Dorlimus. Rodoan looked at him sharply.

“She is a good woman,” said Rodoan. “Much good rede have we of

Clombendorn had from her, as had our fathers and our mothers.”

“Her very age doth show her be a witch,” said Dorlimus. “Belike she cast a spell on Osgern’s grandsire to make him love her, that she might be lady of Ordilans. And belike though he could not help but love her, he could keep himself from giving in to her, and so withstood, as did his son Enfarg and his grandson Osgern. Methinks she be a witch and well will we be rid of her. Let us see whether she side with Kenduar, and then shall we know whether he be wizard or warlock, and we may burn them both.” For by now he truly deemed that any man allied with Alyson was evil and would usurp a lordship. And seven other knights, that had had false tales told them by their wives through Sethlinia’s purveying, yeasaid his speech.

“With my body will I prove ye wrong,” quoth Rodoan, half drawing out his sword. “She is a great lady of noble heart, and no witch but only of great wisdom.”

“Put back thy sword till thou be chosen champion,” said Sir Reltur. “Belike this Kenduar will be put forward by her, to prove her cause as well as his, if he be true heir of Ordilans. For if I hear rightly lore of Imduë, the kinsmen of Angoren were warriors as well as wizards.” For it was Reltur’s delight to hear tell of ancient

lore, that many not well learned did ignore.

Sir Rodoan slid back his sword, and so did Dorlimus, who had drawn his by more than half.

“We are not here to try their cause this moment,” said Sir Reltur. “The thing before us now, meseemeth, is whether it be safe to go unto the tower of Ordilans, that hitherto hath had a sterner name among men stern enough to use it. Is that waste safe for ordinary men to walk upon that mean not to stay therein forever? For only one man I wot of hath had the freedom of coming and going upon the waste around that tower. And I see him not among this company.” The knights all laughed.

Quoth Rodoan, “It hath been said that they who keep within the waste have heretofore been guarded by the lord of the waste from evil that overloometh it. How the pedlar Gisdan avoideth that harm upon leaving place where lord had power, I know not. But of late there came to Gorumdal some servants of the tower who had not till then been seen outside the waste since having gone thereto, and meseemed they got no harm for that they were outside it. Mayhap the evil that was upon the waste did depart with the curse that held Lord Osgern.”

“Mayhap this Kenduar hath been caught himself within the evil of the waste,

and seeketh draw others that they may die there with him,” said Sir Wichelas of Porindal.

“Not with him, if that be so, but after him, and far less painfully,” quoth Reltur, and the dread of that moment passed.

“Nay, methinks his offer to settle lordship be made with good will enough,” said Sir Siriand of Marnilid. “What we must resolve is whether his claim to heirship be likewise true, and whether there be other claims may be as good. For I have claim meseemeth be as good as any, if Angoren and his offspring were not indeed usurpers. For I am, if oath of Arndilia, my mother’s handmaid, hath weight, as much a son of Enfarg as Lord Osgern was.”

The knights were all astonished.

“This tale cometh in fitting time,” quoth Reltur.

“I knew of it not myself till late, for Arndilia had much feared Osgern,” said Sir Siriand. “But we know that Osgern was born of Enfarg’s leman, not a wife, and I am older than Osgern and have therefore a better claim than he to Ordilans, through my mother likewise not his wife but wife indeed of other. It happed in this wise, as Arndilia doth tell: One night there came to house of him I had always deemed my father a woman from the tower, who said Lord Enfarg had need of

Firimun and Onfilidia, my parents to be. And the woman said that Enfarg had power enough to shield them from the evil of the waste if they came there after sunset and went from it ere sunrise, and that he longed to talk with some who served him, and he had power to shield three from the evil if two of them were man and wife. And my parents deemed that they might gain great favour from their lord by comforting his loneliness, so they went three nights later to the waste, and Arndilia with them, for she was young and lovely, and my father thought her beauty might give pleasure to the lord. And they went into the tower and good cheer was made them there. But my father was given a potion in his wine that made him sleep, and Enfarg said he would cut off my father's head unless my mother lay with him. And my mother did as he demanded, and he commanded that my mother and her handmaid say naught thereof to any, and so they swore to him, and they told no one. But my father suspected my mother of having lain with Enfarg freely while he slept, and he himself would never lie with her thereafter. And my mother bore me nine months later. And when old Arndilia heard last Tuesday of Osgern's death, she told unto me this tale, and I bade her swear to it if it were true, for I was much angered, and she so swore. And I believe her. And if my word on that be not enough for ye, ye may hear her swear



again.”

“Never have I heard the like,” said Reltur. “We all did know that Enfarg had been harsh at times, but never heard any of us that he had done dishonour, save for plundering in dragon-shape before the curse had somewhat waned. Had such a tale come unto us and had been proven true against him, he had not long remained our lord, for it was foul deed. Mayhap it were well that we should set aside the lordship of Ordilans over Clombendorn, if that be way the house of Ordilans doth bear itself toward our women, and render the lordship unto another of our number. How say ye?”

Some of the knights did cheer at those words. But Rodoan said, “We are gathered to resolve whether we hear claim of self-styled heir of Ordilans to take up manor of Ordilans, not yet to assign the lordship of Clombendorn, though indeed that must follow soon thereafter. Meseemeth these questions must be taken one unto a time. How say ye, do we give him who claimeth heirship of Ordilans a fair and fitting hearing as is but justice on our part?” And all the knights were so agreed.

Then Rodoan asked, “Shall we go unto the tower of Ordilans for that hearing, or demand of Kenduar that he do come to us? For I deem that if we do the latter,

we set at naught his word that duty keepeth him at tower, and meseemeth it be not fitting to set ourselves thus doubtful against him, as if we did already deem him liar.”

Sir Molinios of Samund said, “I say we ought to show this wizard lordling, if so he be, that we fear him not, not even in that tower of Ordilans that beareth such fell name in the world beyond our Clombendorn. We stand chance of gaining better lord than we have had these many years, and I say we should be brave to seize that chance. For a wizard would make mighty lord, and a mighty lord we well may need to keep our freedom from King Cordimas, that needeth fear no longer Lord Osgern and the power of Osgern’s curse. I only say that if we do take him as our lord, it must be upon condition that he build for us right quickly the castle promised for so long by Osgern.”

And all the knights did so agree, and so rode home, to get ready for the judgement council at Ordilans, and they appointed Rodoan to be at the head of the table thereof. And they agreed also to deal with claim of Siriand at that council.

*Childe Roland in a Fair Tower waited.*

THE HOLDING OF THE FAIR TOWER  
PART V: THE COUNCIL AT THE TOWER

“‘Tis well ye play well the harp,” said Kenduar to Alyson as she and he and Roland waited for the knights of Clombendorn to come to Ordilans upon the day for which they had been summoned. “If there be any among the folk of this domain who be learned in the lore of Ordilans, ‘tis like I be expected to play it for myself, but meseemeth it were better that I hold me ready for to take us by magic from here if the council go against us and the knights should seek to seize us suddenly without waiting for fair judgement or granting appeal to trial by combat. Keep you the harp close by ye, and when I put my ring upon your thumb, do you then play for us that song in praise of wine and music which ye have made ready. Will ye do that for us all?”

Alyson said she would.

“As a carnelian in a setting of gold, so is music where wine is served,” quoth Kenduar. “Ecclesiasticus cometh near to magic in this case.”

“They come,” said Roland, who had stopped his walking back and forth to look, from time to time, from window facing west. A party of horsemen had just come into sight. So the wizard, the knight, and the lady went down the winding stair and down the outer steps, to meet the knights of Clombendorn, who came nigh and then dismounted.

“Which calleth himself Kenduar of Ordilans?” asked Rodoan.

“I hight Kenduar,” said the wizard. And each side gave other all their names. “Will ye come within?” asked Kenduar. He told servants to look after the horses of the knights and the horses that bore the litter wherein rode old Arndilia, handmaid of Sir Siriand's dead mother.

“The land around Tower Ordilans now looketh fairer than did erst,” said Sir Reltur.

“That evil now withdraweth,” said Kenduar. “It hath withdrawn wholly from the tower, save for the dragon-hoard that Osgern left.” He brought his hands to front of him, that had been clasped behind his back a little while, and a finger of his left hand did touch the stone in the ring upon his right.

“Ye wear the Ring of Wine and Music,” said Imduë. “Ye should then indeed be heir to Ordilans, if the lore of Ordilans be sooth.”

“True indeed is that lore,” quoth Kenduar. “Have ye had training in wizardry?”

“Have had some training, but lack the gift,” said Imduë. “I cannot open myself as pathway for the powers. I learn lore and offer rede.”

“I now will prove to ye the truth of my claim whereof I wrote to ye, and prove also truth of lore of Ordilans,” said Kenduar. “Come within, and my claim will come before ye.” And all of them went up the stairs, Alyson aiding Arndilia, who seemed a little fearful of her, and they sat at the table that had been Lord Osgern’s high table, with Rodoan at the head thereof and the thirteen other knights sitting at the sides, and Imduë standing behind Sir Rodoan, and Kenduar, Alyson, and Roland sitting a short way from the foot. Then each of the three did tell his story, as the tale hath told before. And Kenduar told his first, and as he told it, Sir Dorlimus came to believe him, for Sir Dorlimus deemed himself good judge of the telling of truth or falsehood, and he deemed that Kenduar was honest man. And he thought unto himself that Alyson indeed could not be allied with Kenduar but that Kenduar would join him in condemning that evil witch, as Kenduar was true wizard, and he nodded to Sir Nondolas who was his crony. And Kenduar did

say that the wizard-warrior who sought avenge Lord Angoren was Angoren’s closest kinsman and was heir to Ordilans upon death of Angoren. And when that wizard, whose name was Olfolidas, had fallen to the dragon, the Ring of Wine and Music had vanished from his hand and had appeared upon the hand of his young son, who would become the great-great-great-grandsire of Kenduar. And the Wise forsook the house of Olfolidas, heirs to Ordilans, deeming them no longer worthy of learning wizardry, sithen Olfolidas, whom some Wise had envied for his privilege of marriage, lacked wisdom in facing dragon with sword alone, albeit gift of opening pathway unto power remained in their inheritance. And the family changed its name and stayed obscure until Kenduar’s father was able to apprentice him to a wizard more lax than most regarding worthiness of breeding amongst the Wise.

“And so I wear the Ring of Wine and Music now,” said Kenduar, “and only I or one to whom I freely lend it for short time may safely wear it, though other than I may not upon ring finger. Thus Imduë can tell ye, and I can call on more with greater learning to swear that it be true. And I can offer proof thereof, by putting down this ring and letting any take it up without my bidding him.”

Many of the knights looked then at Siriand. But Sir Reltur said, “Nay, that

would only prove ye had a ring enchanted to be deadly unto other than yourself. Hath it any other way to prove itself to be the very Ring of Wine and Music?”

“That it hath,” quoth Kenduar. “But the time to show it be not yet.”

“And your tale be true, then indeed was Enfarg-Osgern usurper,” said Sir Reltur. “Why not prove it now and let be done?”

“It is the custom of a court that it hear all witnesses who can have bearing,” said Kenduar. “Let that be done, and then shall I give further proof with Ring, if that be needed.”

“Then let us hear next witness,” said Sir Rodoan. And Lady Alyson did tell her story. And as she told it, the good judgement of Sir Dorlimus anent another’s telling of truth or falsehood was blinded by his hatred, and those things which he had seen in Kenduar as signs of honesty he now saw in Alyson as tokens of sly treachery.

When Alyson did finish the tale she told, the fourteen knights did question her right closely anent those things told of her in the tales which had been brought to them ere they had made the judgement council, and she denied the ill things said of her, and she told the knights of much good rede that she had given unto folk of their domain, and she said such folk ought to be called to give witness of her. But

of the tale of Sethlinia to Dorlimus naught was said, for there-aneant Sir Dorlimus kept silence. And Dorlimus said, “This witch hath cozened noble Kenduar to make him believe she had been wronged, when in truth she hath had evil of her own to work in our domain as captor and beguiler of the soul of Osgern. What knoweth Kenduar of what had driven Osgern unto his desire of ravishing the witch?” And the seven knights who erst agreed with him all nodded, and some of them said, “Ay!” And the knight to whom Sir Dorlimus had nodded short time erst now said, “Let us have no more of this. Let us choose a new lord, that will not be cozened, and let that lord be Rodoan.”

“Not yet may we deal with that,” said Rodoan. “We have not heard Sir Siriand’s claim, nor witness of this brave knight who wizard and lady both tell us was Osgern’s death.” So then Sir Roland told his tale.

“This witness telleth naught to the purpose,” said Sir Dorlimus when Roland’s tale was ended. “All he knoweth of this woman is that she had been stolen from her home in far-off England long ago. What she hath become since then he knoweth not, no more than noble Kenduar. What knoweth he of ways of witch and wizard, that is but simple knight like us?”

“Three-and-twenty years of wandering, strife, and toil have taught me to know



truth when I do hear it,” said Sir Roland. “And anyone that hath lived so long as Lady Alyson, must be either greatly good or greatly evil, and I trow there is no evil in her. She telleth tale that accordeth well with tale of Kenduar for that both speak truth. That Osgern was as foul a foe as I have ever faced.”

“And what hope you to gain from all of this?” asked Dorlimus. “What is your reward for slaying of our lord?”

“He was not rightfully your lord,” said Roland. “I sought no reward for slaying him, save that Lady Alyson be freed. But she hath since agreed to marry me, which is indeed great guerdon.”

“And where will live?” asked Dorlimus. “Have ye any claims to land after so long time wandering?”

“I could return to England,” Roland said. “My brother was heir to wide lands there, and I could do him service. And many have I helped while wandering, that would be glad now of my giving vassalage.”

“And ye be pleased to take this witch till she be far from here, it may not go so ill with her,” quoth Dorlimus. “But suffer we no witch to dwell in Clombendorn.”

“This council hath been called for to settle Kenduar’s claim of right unto the lordship of Ordilans,” said Rodoan. “No one hath accused the lady Alyson of

witchcraft.”

“We have not yet heard those who knew her best,” said Dorlimus. “These may bring the matter more to light.”

Then the council heard Gathina. She told them that in her twenty years within the tower, from a tender age, she had heard much from Osgern, who she said had loved her for the past two years as much as his enchantment by Alyson might allow and who had married her had not that fell enchantment barred his loving fully, of the story that came down to him from sire and grandsire. She said she had been told that after the sorcerer who had destroyed the castle saw that he had failed destroy utterly Lord Angoren, that sorcerer sent Alyson, a witch long-living, to keep Angoren-Enfarg from defeating, by lying with a maiden, the curse that had been put upon him. For the witch Alyson, so Gathina told the knights, had cast a spell upon Lord Enfarg that he might lie with no maiden but herself, and then withheld the boon that he must seek of maiden. And Gathina told the knights that Alyson also had told her so one day, for to torment her, when she knew that Osgern’s heart was turned unto Gathina. And many of the knights believed Gathina, but Sir Dorlimus did not, for himseemed that she was filled with malice, which was a thing that well he understood, and not with honest

seeking of a just vengeance, which also met his understanding. Thus the thought did come to him that Lady Alyson might be innocent of other charges besides this one. But he put that thought aside, for he wanted to believe his wife.

Gathina told the knights also that Osgern’s mother had languished and died from practice of the arts of Alyson. But Alyson said, “Nolinia languished for that Osgern did not love her as son ought, and she died of sickness from which I tried hard to save her, as ye know well.” But Gathina held to the things that she had told, and swore to them with great oath.

After Gathina had borne witness, then Arndilia spoke to the knights of Clombendorn and told them the tale that Sir Siriand earlier had given them. And she said also that it was Alyson who gave Firimun the potion that had made him sleep. And she said that Angoren-Enfarg told her that the son whom he begot that night would not bear the dragon-curse, for that he should be born outside the tower waste. She said also that Enfarg told him that the witch Alyson had allowed him lie with another lady for that his great desire had given rise unto desire within the witch so that she feared she might give in to him and thus bring down upon herself the wrath of the mighty sorcerer she served.

Dorlimus deemed he saw in Arndilia, as she was speaking, great fear of

Siriand, though the other knights marked it not, but again he put the thought aside.

When Arndilia had finished the tale she told, the knights did bid the tower servants to bear witness about the lives of Osgern and of Alyson. But there was naught that they could add to what was said already.

Then Sir Rodoan did ask of Kenduar, Alyson, and Roland whether they had more to offer. And they said that they did not. And the knights gan argue, and most of them were minded to have Kenduar take up Ordilans, but most were minded also to burn Alyson as witch. But Kenduar said to them, “Have ye forgotten that ye had expected me to prove beyond all doubt the truth of what I told ye, if I am indeed the lord of Ordilans? But listen now and ye shall hear what will convince ye.” And he took off the ring he wore on his right hand and put it on the thumb of Lady Alyson. And Sir Boriosin said, “Beware! Seize the witch before she can enchant us!” But Alyson moved her fingers on the harpstrings, and all who were in that hall were still and silent, and Lady Alyson played on. And the harp sang of joys of wine and music blended, and of love whose joys are greatedened by enjoyment of wine and music by the lovers, and of wine that raiseth blood unto the brain wherein the love of music dwelleth, and maketh the heart to beat the faster for to stir the soul to seeing wider patterns in the melody of music.

And it sang of music that lifteth heart of man in riding or in marching unto war, and of blood poured out like wine in libation in battles fought for righteous causes. It sang, with voice most sweet and strong and solemn, of music during Mass embracing the quiet time when wine becomes the Blood of Christ for making God's the things of men who love the truth. And it sang of men's beholding of lesser things, like pleasures of wine and music, that are but intertwined as lesser threads in the pattern of truth that is the chief and proper object of man's beholding.

All those who were there were thus made able see the truth of their own lives and discern the causes that had led them to the doing of their deeds, and Sir Dorlimus learned that he did his deeds that he might earn love by them, and that the only one of those he knew who would love him for being moved thus was his lady Sethlinia. And he saw that she was really all he had on earth unless he change the way he saw himself and come to love for its own sake what in itself is good, and cease to love himself above all else. And he saw that Alyson had told the truth, as had Kenduar and Roland, who would defend her, and his thought did show to him how matters had truly stood between Sethlinia and Rodoan, and he knew that he was Sethlinia's second choice of lover. And the harp's enhancement

of their beholding made all the knights to see the truth in that which had been told them in the day whereon the harp was played for them, so that they saw that Kenduar and Alyson and Roland told in divers ways of each one whole story fully true. And they knew that Gathina and Arndilia had lied, but they knew not why Arndilia had lied, for nothing had been told to them thereof upon that day. And they all, but one, found Roland, Kenduar, and Lady Alyson now fully blameless.

“See ye not,” said Sir Dorlimus, when that judgement had been made, “that this warlock is the sorcerer who put the curse on Angoren, and that the witch hath been his servant? And both of them have worked foul magic to make ye take as truth their cunning story. But me they have not gulled, nor with lies nor with magic. I believe Gathina and Arndilia, and will prove with my body the truth of what they tell. Gathina and Arndilia, will ye take me for your champion?” And each of the two women said they would.

“And ye do keep this judgement ye have made while under the bewitchment, ye must set forward one to fight me,” quoth Sir Dorlimus. “None may refuse the appeal to trial by combat. Who will be your champion?”

“That will I,” said Roland. But Rodoan said, “That should rather be my place, sithen I am head of council that condemneth them. For do we not,” he asked the

knights, “condemn these liars to the death they planned for Lady Alyson? Have they not wrought trial of themselves this day?” And all the knights yeasaid his words, and so did Siriand. And Rodoan said, “Shall we fight now, or shall we set another day for combat?”

“Let it be done now,” said Dorlimus, “that witch and warlock may burn as soon as may be. For I accuse them both of witchcraft, and with my body shall I prove it.”

And so they went outside, Rodoan and Dorlimus to fight, and the others to watch their combat. And Kenduar signed to Roland and Alyson to stand beside him.

Now, Rodoan and Dorlimus were both good men of their hands, but Dorlimus was deemed the stronger, and he deemed that this one fight would rid him both of Rodoan whom his lady Sethlinia had once loved and the lady Alyson whom his lady seemed have cause to hate. For he deemed not, having fought as champion in other causes, that the outcome of trial by combat always favoured the right. But if it should go thus in this case, he was content to die and be in Hell, for life with Rodoan alive in it seemed yet less sweet to him than that.

Kenduar, Roland, and Alyson watched a short way from the knights of

Clombendorn as Rodoan and Dorlimus made ready for combat, fully armed, riding away from each other and looking closely to the ground beneath their horses' hooves as they did ride. Then they turned and galloped at each other, lances couched. The lance of each to-shivered without unseating other, and each got a new lance. Then rode they again apart, and again turned and galloped, and the spear of Dorlimus did break in two as spear of Rodoan did cast him over his horse's tail, to fall flat upon his back as Rodoan galloped past and then stopped and turned and did dismount. Seemed it then to Roland that the combat was ended and all was well with him and his two friends, but as Sir Rodoan strode toward him, Sir Dorlimus did move and turn upon his side, toward the left, and raised his upper body upon the elbow of his arm that held his shield, and put his right hand upon the shield and turned over onto his left knee and brought his right knee over to beside it, then moved his right hand to the ground beside the shield and so pushed himself upward, bringing his left foot up beside right knee and so making himself to stand. And he found Sir Rodoan in front of him with sword held ready for to strike. And Sir Rodoan allowed him to draw his sword. And then, feigning slightly stagger, Sir Dorlimus cut suddenly at legs of Rodoan. But Rodoan leaped lightly over that fell stroke and cut down at head of Dorlimus, who warded right



deftly with his shield. Again did Dorlimus strike at legs, and again did Rodoan leap over stroke, but this time, raising shield to ward another downward cut at head, Sir Dorlimus struck a backhand stroke again at legs as Rodoan's feet came down. But Rodoan put that stroke by with a downward warding of his blade, which he followed with a circling cut at his foe's extended arm. But Dorlimus drew his arm both back and up, and cut at Rodoan's right side. But Rodoan did pivot and put his shield between.

Thus traded they strokes for half an hour without either wounding other, while Roland deemed that Rodoan was weakening and Dorlimus stayed strong, until Rodoan made cut at head of Dorlimus, then swiftly crouched and put his shield under shield of Dorlimus as it was quickly raised, then hooked his quillon behind knee of Dorlimus and pulled it hard while pushing with his shield, so that Dorlimus was overbalanced and fell backward after giving Rodoan small wound with sudden cut upon left leg. And sword of Dorlimus went from his hand as he did fall, but the wound in Rodoan's left leg did keep him from striding to stand over Dorlimus before Dorlimus got quickly up and took again his sword. But Dorlimus was not minded to take advantage of that wounding by moving about Sir Rodoan and letting wound in bleeding work for him, but moved in quickly and

made cut at legs. Rodoan stooped and warded with his shield, then forced shield up under and against the swordarm, and as Dorlimus pushed back with arm to keep from being overbalanced as Rodoan painfully moved forward, Sir Rodoan cut at the arm, whereon he made grievous wound. Dorlimus did drop his sword. As sword fell, Sir Rodoan, though he was loth, yet was he stern for sake of Lady Alyson, and cut him swiftly on left leg so that he fell, to keep him from moving away and so forestalling end of combat.

“Yield ye,” said Sir Rodoan, standing over him and pointing sword at throat.

Dorlimus said: “Thou’lt have to slay me. I’ll yield me not to champion of witch and warlock, whose powers doubtless aided thee.”

But the other knights had gathered round and they agreed with Rodoan there was no need to slay, for Dorlimus was clearly defeated and the honesty of Lady Alyson and Kenduar thus proven. So the wounds of both knights were bound up, and the company went again into the tower. But the hatred of Dorlimus for Rodoan was worsened, and within himself he vowed revenge. And the council of the knights of Clombendorn condemned Arndilia and Gathina to be burned to death. And they locked them in the room where Gathina had been kept before. And they all agreed that Kenduar was rightful heir of Ordilans, and confirmed

him in its lordship, but Kenduar said, “It is not a wizard’s place that he be lord of any domain of men, for his service to his folk be of different kind from that a lord doth give. I therefore am minded to give unto Sir Roland the lordship of fair Ordilans. For he hath shown himself able foeman of the dragon fell that cursed this fair domain, and a fair withstander of the evil of the dragon’s hoard. He alone may be safely trusted to handle the treasures of the hoard and give them out to those who justly claim them. I name him lord of Ordilans and yield him all my right thereto, upon condition that I remain as counsellor.”

“Thereto will I agree right heartily,” said Roland.

Then said Kenduar unto the knights of Clombendorn, “And ye do as I would rede, ye will take Sir Roland as lord of Clombendorn, as hath been custom anent the lord of Ordilans. For Sir Roland is likewise of noble blood. And he is an able warrior and much learned in the stratagems of war, and he knoweth and doeth justice.”

“We have resolved,” said Sir Reltur, “that he who would be our lord must give us the castle that Enfarg-Osgern promised us. He had collected taxes for many years unto its building, until he had enough and to spare for to make a mighty stronghold, but ever he put it off. And now we know he wanted treasure for its

own sake only.”

“Right gladly would I build a mighty castle, were I lord of Clombendorn,” said Roland.

All the knights save Dorlimus and Siriand agreed give homage a fortnight thence, unto Sir Roland as lord of Clombendorn. But Siriand and Dorlimus said that they would hold their own lands by themselves thenceforward, without aid of lord of Ordilans or of his vassals. And that was their right, which none might gainsay. And when the knights were thus agreed, the lady Alyson did say that she would ask a boon of the new Lord of Clombendorn. And she besought him to forgive Gathina and Arndilia the false witness they had borne, that they might not be burned to death. She said it would be enough if they were shriven and did the penance the priest would give them.

“That boon is not my boon to grant, for they were condemned by the council of the knights of Clombendorn before my coming unto lordship,” quoth Lord Roland. “But for your sake I ask now of these good knights that they will grant the liars their forgiveness and not burn them.”

The knights did grant that boon to Roland and to Alyson. And Arndilia did kiss the feet of Alyson when she was freed.

Siriand and Dorlimus did depart at once the tower of Ordilans, but the other knights did stay to partake of meat and drink with their new lord and his new counsellor. And as they ate, Sir Reltur said to Kenduar, “Lord Wizard, that was passing marvellous good music that Lady Alyson did make for us with that ring of yours upon her thumb. How worketh the ordering of such marvel, if it be not secret ye may not tell to men not wizards?”

“It harmeth not that I might tell ye, in general sort, of the working of Ring of Wine and Music,” said Kenduar. “This ring is rare among devices magical, in that it be wholly a helping of the angels of God unto men. For magic, as ye may have heard, is the working on the world of angels or of demons, or of both together, under direction of men who use the ancient tongue our father Adam used in talking with angels in Eden, or so the Wise believe. Our teaching is that God did give to some among His angels, ere some did rebel, the duty of making work the natural laws which rule the universe of matter. This duty do angels and fiends still carry out, the angels under free obedience and the devils under great constraint, to keep in fair good order the world of men.

“The rule of angels and of devils over the world of men is so much mixed that for most part it passeth power of man to say which ruleth where and when, so that

a wizard knoweth not, unless an elder guide him, when he cometh first to use the ancient tongue, whether it be angelic or demonic power that answereth his call. Thus there is great care needed for an apprentice wizard to guard himself with rigid rituals, against attack of demons loth to give good service unto man. And that holdeth true in cases where service even skilled and learned wizard doth demand is one wherein the demons hold more sway than angels. But some wizards as they grow in practice and in skill do come to know which aspects of their art be governed by angels and which by demons, and thus they learn to use those aspects, and some fair and skilful joinings of them, to gain help that is far more angelic than demonic. But some choose to use demonic help more widely, and such we do call sorcerers. A wizard, for the most part, becometh very good or very evil as he groweth old in practice of his art, and wizards who become right holy do forsake our art entirely. That is why sorcery hath so much power in the world.

“Wizards and sorcerers use the services of spirits to carry out their wonders, by making themselves channels wherethrough the powers of spirits may flow upon the world for doing deeds outside the customary work of spirits. Few are we who can thus ope ourselves. But there are others, also few, who can make channels of

things non-living, and the Ring of Wine and Music is one such thing.

“We know not, yet, whether demon or angel ruleth over water, though many think that angel doth, nor know we which ruleth over liquid in general, or over drink in general, or over plant or fruit, or sound, but we do know that angel ruleth over music, and angel ruleth over wine. That knowledge came from Narbicana, a land whereof some wizards wot, where magic and the mind of man are in sweet harmony. And these two angels work well together unto the good of man, so that mention of their partnership is made in Ecclesiasticus, in the saying that ‘As a carnelian in a setting of gold, so is a concert where wine is served.’ The stone in my ring is carnelian, which is of the colour of wine, and the ring itself is of gold which is bright like brilliant music. But the saying in the Bible seemeth liken the music to carnelian and the wine unto the gold, so that ablings it may mean the music is so much richer than wine, as the stone is darker than the gold, so that music is wine of soul and wine a mere brightness that enhanceth music which is for our beholding. Thus is it symbol of a great enriching. And an artist of great might in making and beholding who had great measure of the lore of Narbicana was minded one day to make the symbol almost a living thing, to aid in mortals’ seeing of the truth, and so he did. And by his means and in their freedom, the

angels who rule wine and music did pledge themselves unto that gold and that dark stone which make this ring, to show to men the truth that is in whatever may be told to them on a day whereon one maketh music for them while that he weareth the ring. And when a man withstandeth truth that is thus given him, then may it be known that he withstandeth it from illness of his will and not mere error. Wherefore will Sir Dorlimus and Sir Siriand bear watching henceforth.”

“Well will it be that this ring be close at hand when Lord Roland sitteth in judgement,” quoth Sir Reltur. “And may he be at hand to sit in judgement over our domain for many years.” And the knights all drank to that.

*Lord Roland in the Fair Tower ruled.*



BOOK III

THE SIEGE OF CLOMBENDORN

PART I: THE WEDDING

After the knights of Clombendorn had left Tower Ordilans, Kenduar, Sir Roland, and Lady Alsyon sat at table where they had eaten with the knights, and Kenduar said to knight and lady: “I must depart in day or two, for to study of the Lore of the Wise that belongeth to Tower Ordilans. For meseemeth this place be meant for even greater doings, sithen Merlin put so great a spell upon the lady who was to be captive here so long. I must seek fathom his deep design, that I may aid it if need be. And, though it may seem not meet that I should speak unto ye thus, yet must I rede ye take care your love that I have seen between ye these last days, do not o’ermatch ye to the loss of maidenhead afore ye wed. For maidenhead kept so long under such heavy trial can be a mighty thing in

plannings of the Wise, and it were ill that such a gem were given up unfittingly, apart from sinfulness of man and woman lying together unwed. Meseemeth that ye that love each other well may need no such rede, but my duty as wizard demandeth that I give it.”

“We take not ill what you have said,” quoth Roland. “The lady draweth much my desire.”

“We shall have Sir Rodoan and his lady to stay with ye while I be gone,” said Kenduar. “Their company will serve as aid to your forbearance, and make seemly your dwelling here together.” And so it was agreed.

“Meseemeth also it be strange,” said Kenduar, “that dragon small as Osgern was should have such power as hath been wielded here, for the destroying of Castle Clombendorn and the wasting and making evil of the land. Meseemeth it hath smell of borrowed power, and I would know who sought to gain, and what he sought, that lent such power unto Osgern.”

And he said further: “There is another thing that we would do well to take thought for, and that is the making whole of Cleavescale. It is still a deadly weapon unto dragons, but its having hilt and pommel that were made for it would make its wielding better and more mighty. And seldom doth it hap that such

things are lost forever. We must seek that hilt and pommel. For such weapons are meant for mighty doings, and it is not like that we shall scape such doings while we own such weapon. In what country and in what village made ye exchange of swords that gat ye Cleavescale?”

Sir Roland told him, and the place was far away.

“That is in direction counter to what I take in seeking lore,” quoth Kenduar. “Else might I seek recover them on my way back, but meseemeth I will not have time therefor if I am to study the place’s mysteries afore your wedding, which meseemeth may be much needed. For it may be that maidenhead of Alyson is greater thing than marriage of ye twain. Though I hope it be not so, for meseemeth ye be well suited to be lord and lady together of this domain. I depart upon the morrow. God grant I bring good tidings when I come back to ye.”

And on the morrow went Kenduar to top of tower and there made magic to take him to that wizard who was Chief among the Wise. And Roland and Alyson sent for Lady Ondima to come to them, and with her and Rodoan they waited for Kenduar’s return. And one day as they were talking of all that had befallen them of late, Lady Ondima said, “If the dragon-hoard be perilous to touch, how will ye take from it the treasure needful for rebuilding Castle Clombendorn?”

Sir Roland said, “It is a thing we must ask Kenduar when he cometh back.”

Three days before the wedding was to be made, Kenduar returned to Ordilans. And he told Roland and Alyson that he had learned much from the Wise about the past of Tower Ordilans, but that it was not meet for for him to tell of it to them, for if they knew what was toward, then Merlin’s plan for them might fail. And he said that Merlin’s designs for them did need that Alyson keep long time more the maidenhead she had refused yield Osgern, but the rede of the Wise did not deny her marriage. “For ye may need be wed to keep ye both, or one of ye, from sinning much, and one mortal sin is greater evil than any falling short of any plan of Merlin or of any of the Wise, though that might mean great harm of bodily kind to many men,” said Kenduar. “And,” quoth he, “I have learned how Osgern had the power he did use, and that lore is joined to lore of Merlin’s plan and so must eke be kept from ye, lest the plan miscarry. If it fail, I alone must bear the burden of its failing. But there will be danger of mortal sin for ye in the testing that the plan will call for.”

“And ye may not tell us, ye may not,” said Roland. “We do trust ye.” And so said Alyson.

“But,” said Roland, “have ye learned aught that ye may tell anent the making

whole of Cleavescale?”

“Indeed,” said Kenduar. “The hilt and pommel still are on the sword by which ye left them after it was broken, which was reforged for the lord of that domain, after a smith who was in the tavern then did see the goodliness of the blade. And that smith dimly saw, for he was greatly skilled, that there was virtue in that hilt and pommel. And the Wise have told me that the getting back of that hilt and pommel is to be a quest for a shrewd and honest trader, that I may not help by magic on his quest.”

“Then,” said Sir Roland, “we may call upon the pedlar Gisdan, who seemeth from my talk with him to be most shrewd and who indeed must be most honest if he could come and go upon the tower waste of Osgern without harm unto his soul from Osgern’s power or the lure of the hoard. He must be honest than I if he could come hither for common chaffer only, and not with quest as great as mine to guard his soul.”

“Meseemeth ye have hit upon the very man,” quoth Kenduar. “When Gisdan cometh next to Ordilans, we will put that quest before him. Ye say well.”

“The question hath arisen,” said Roland, “anent our dealing with that very hoard that tempteth Gisdan not: How shall I take treasure from it for the building

of the castle?"

"It needeth only that ye take up treasure from the hoard into your hand," said Kenduar. "And the treasure that ye hold be not part of what belongeth rightfully to Clombendorn, it will raise within your heart a hot desire for the whole. But if it belongeth unto Clombendorn, ye shall have no such desire, but only such as shall be fitting for what ye hold if itself be fair to look upon. It is a simple thing but perilous, but ye have been tested and proven fit to bear.

"And now, are ye ready for your wedding?"

Roland and Alyson said that they were ready, with fine raiment chosen and a great feast that was toward. The wedding was to be made in the great Cathedral of Saint Althemis, which was in the centre of Clombendorn, in Sir Reltur's manor.

The time had been passing right slowly for Sir Roland while he knew not surely whether he might marry Alyson, but now that he knew he was to marry her but not right soon to lie with her thereafter, himseemed the time did go at common pace. And so without a great impatience on his part the three days went by, and Sir Roland and Lady Alyson were wed within the great cathedral and held the place of honour at the feast thereafter given in Sir Reltur's hall. And Sir Reltur led them after feasting unto the finest chamber of his house and bade them pass the

night therein. And so they did, but with Alyson sleeping in the bed and Roland much of the time awake in blankets upon the floor, for he dared not share the bed lest Merlin's plan miscarry.

When they went back to Ordilans, Kenduar put a spell upon Sir Roland, a lesser spell by far than Merlin's, so that he might not further age till he had lain with Alyson.

*Lord Roland o'er a Fell Sapphire waited.*

THE SIEGE OF CLOMBENDORN

PART II: SIR DORLIMUS AND SIR SIRIAND

Soon after Sir Roland and Lady Alyson were wed and the other knights had done homage to Roland as Lord of Clombendorn, Sir Dorlimus and Sir Siriand went to the palace of King Cordimas of Dormondinal and said to him: “Lord King, we alone of all the knights of Clombendorn acknowledge rightful your claim to kingship over Clombendorn, that you have made for many years but not yet have put to test of battle. We do rede now that ye make good your claim, when it may easily be done before Sir Roland of far-off England, self-styled Lord of Clombendorn, will have builded for Clombendorn a castle like that it had of old, which was destroyed when curse of dragon-shape was put upon Lord Angoren, that took the name of Enfarg in his great unhappiness. For now that Lord Osgern, grandson of Angoren, is overthrown and slain, as ye have heard,



this Roland is minded to restore to Ordilans that splendour which it knew of old as chief manor of Clombendorn. And the knights of Clombendorn have told him that they and their sires and grandsires gave much gold and other treasure to Osgern and his sire and grandsire for that restoring. And that treasure was put into the hoard that Osgern in his dragon shape did keep, and so was tainted by the evil of that hoard, but the wizard Kenduar hath told Sir Roland that he can safely take from the hoard such money and gems as rightfully belong to Clombendorn, by handling the treasure and keeping for Clombendorn only those parts of it which kindle not within his heart a strong desire to take all. For the wizard sayeth Sir Roland is the only man, save mayhap one other, who can withstand that great desire. And Sir Roland hath sithence been sorting rightful gold and gems of Clombendorn from the dragon-hoard of Osgern, that he may therewith hire building of a mighty castle. He hath already set men to work upon restoring of the two lost storeys of Tower Ordilans, that also is named now the Fair Tower. And ye do set upon him now, ye may take easily the domain of Clombendorn to rule it for your own, and have the treasure that was Osgern's to use as ye deem fit, so that ye might use it for building of a castle held by lord of your own choosing or take it for your own delight and pleasure. And we are ready to help ye take what

we deem your rightful kingship over Clombendorn.”

“And what reward will ye have for helping me thereto?” asked Cordimas.

“We have thought, Lord King, that ye might make Sir Siriand the lord of Clombendorn under your majesty, and if ye deem it fitting, he might make me his second in command,” said Dorlimus. “Your Majesty might deem it shrewd to have the lordship under ye held by one already knight of Clombendorn. And indeed Sir Siriand hath claim to Ordilans wherefrom he hath been barred by magic of the sorcerer Kenduar, of whom your folk do say ye have been told.” And he and Sir Siriand told King Cordimas that tale of the fathering of Siriand that had been set aside by judgement of the knights of Clombendorn.

“‘Tis pity ye were not acclaimed as lord of Clombendorn,” said Cordimas. “Ye could then have acknowledged me as sovereign and saved me trouble of taking Clombendorn by force of arms.”

“That is so indeed, Lord King,” said Siriand. “Such was mine intent in seeking that lordship.”

“That intent doth ye much honour,” said King Cordimas. “We will give thought to what ye have said.”

When the two knights of Clombendorn had left, King Cordimas took rede of

Olminduad, who was his chief adviser. And Olminduad told Cordimas that power of Kenduar was like to be much greater now than erst, for some time to come, by reason of his defeat of Osgern Dragonheart, and that Cordimas should delay attack on Clombendorn until that enlargement of wizard's power should have waned, even though that give Lord Roland time to build a mighty castle. For the taking of a castle is a lighter task than defeating of a wizard that hath had another's power freshly added unto him, said Olminduad. For Olminduad thought he knew somewhat of magic. So King Cordimas sent word to Sir Siriand and Sir Dorlimus that he would not then seek put Clombendorn beneath him, not at that time. And they were much disappointed, but they stinted not in hatred, which they hid, of Lord Roland and Sir Rodoan.

But when five years had passed, wherein King Cordimas heard oft of the growing apace of Lord Roland's castle, Sir Siriand and Sir Dorlimus came again to Cordimas and said to him: "Lord King, now is Castle Clombendorn quite finished, and well victualled and garnished, and Lord Roland is as ready as may be to withstand what may be done against him. But we have heard that the last time he went to Osgern's hoard to take out treasure for the workmen, he came upon a sapphire large, that Imduë of Gorumdal said is called the Gem of

Irndolmes. And Imduë said that whosoever owned that gem, after having fought for it and gained or kept it thereby, could never be defeated while he thereafter kept it. And Kenduar said then that Imduë hath lore beyond the common. So we rede ye now that and ye desire the domain of Clombendorn, ye should attack before Lord Roland maketh war on weaker foe to gain the working of that magic gem toward his favour. For we are still ready for to aid you.”

King Cordimas took rede again of Olminduad, who said then that he had heard inklings of a tale of such a sapphire as the Gem of Irndolmes, and himseemed that Siriand and Dorlimus gave good rede. So King Cordimas asked them how they were minded to serve him now. And Sir Siriand said, “Ye know, Lord King, how we have held aloof from lordship of Lord Roland, holding our lands unto ourselves. It is our intent that, when word is brought that ye are come against our Clombendorn, we should feign to honour Roland as our lord, that he might give us protection of Castle Clombendorn against ye. And when ye come against the castle, we shall purvey that we two have command of part of the walls thereof, that when ye bring berfries against our part, we may let your men onto the walls and may then join them in attack, turning our part over to your army. And if we can, we shall purvey that one of us will be upon the outer wall and the other upon

the inner that is right behind that one, that we may the more readily give aid unto your forces.”

King Cordimas said: “And will ye swear false oaths unto Lord Roland that will make toward my favouring? How then may ye be trusted?”

Sir Siriand said, “Lord King, we shall swear our homage first to you, and then only feign that we swear homage unto Roland, that we may not be verily forsworn. For an oath sworn only in feigning be not a very oath, as I do deem.”

And so they were agreed all three.

*Lord Roland o'er a Fell Sapphire waited.*

THE SIEGE OF CLOMBENDORN  
PART III: GATHINA'S PILGRIMAGE

After Gathina had gone to Father Nondinas for shriving, she told the folk of Clombendorn that he had commanded her for penance to go upon a pilgrimage unto a shrine afar, the Shrine of Saint Catherine at Forlunnus, in the north. And she said that she must make the pilgrimage alone and afoot, and beg her food upon the way. But Arndilia told no one what her penance was, but fulfilled it well and wholly, all in secret. And Gathina made ready for her pilgrimage, taking a bundle of warm clothing for to carry on her back, and she had a staff with a cross fixed to it, to show she was on pilgrimage, and so set out.

Gathina walked for many days, and begged for food, and told all with whom she had much talk that she was on pilgrimage for having tried avenge a murdered lover. And folk deemed her lover had been murdered by a jealous enemy, and

some of them respected her almost as much for her offence as for the devotion she showed unto her penance. And when Gathina had gone many leagues with food from many kindly folk and with no hindering, for even robbers, of whom she met a few, respected pilgrimage made for penance and deemed that they themselves would like not hindering in seeking of forgiveness later for their own many sins, she came one day unto a crossroads around which a knight in armour slowly rode a mighty horse. And as she came into the crossroads, he rode to her and got him down, and did off his helm, and she saw he wore a vizard under it, that hid the upper half of face, and he said, "Whither go ye, fair maiden?"

She said, "I am on pilgrimage unto the Shrine of Saint George at Ormolnois, where his statue keepeth great evil from the world, in penance for seeking to avenge without the law my murdered lover."

The knight said: "I hope he loved ye well, for love like yours deserveth full return. Would that woman might so love me, but a curse is put upon me that no woman who seeth my face in full may find it fair, though when I show each half of it with other half well covered, meseemeth it showeth none so ugly. Which half would ye rather look upon? Or mattereth it to ye at all, that know me not and may not wish to?"

Gathina said: "Meseemeth man doth better to show that part of face which is about the eyes, if indeed he may not show it all. Or may you show the upper half to one hath seen the lower, without calling up the working of the curse?"

"Indeed I may," quoth he. "'Tis a strange curse, that an evil-mind aunt did put upon me, and meseemeth that it may have been not thoroughly thought upon before its making." And he bound a kerchief over bridge of nose, and loosed the vizard and showed that part of face which was above. And Gathina deemed that it was fair, as she had deemed the lower part, and she said: "Meseemeth your face in full could show itself to be not ugly, for the parts thereof seem not unhandsome. I pray ye, therefore, do off that kerchief, and leave the vizard off, that I may see which part doth change when your face is seen in fulness?"

"Nay," said the young knight. "Too many maids have I already turned from looking well upon me. I know not how my face doth show itself to them when full uncovered, for to me in glass it seemeth as it ever did, but no woman ever looketh at me twice when my face hath been more than half uncovered. And unless I meet a maiden who can bear to see but half her husband's face, I shall not have my inheritance when my father dieth, which I hope will not be soon. For unless I give my father hope of my getting heir for our domain, he will leave the whole domain



unto my younger brother. So I wander through far countries seeking to do some woman such great service as to have her marry me despite my being able to show her only half my face. Can I in any way give service unto ye, fair maid?" And he smiled what seemed from eyes alone a fully pleasing, jestful smile.

"Nay, Sir Knight, methinks not," quoth Gathina. "Were ye to go with me as guard upon my pilgrimage, meseemeth presence of one knight only would be rather a challenge than a hindrance unto band of robbers, and robbers so far have left me alone, even those that seemed most lecherous, when I did tell them of my duty."

"But I am not alone," the knight said then. "I have a score of boon companions awaiting my return to a village on your road. I will go with ye all the way unto the shrine if ye will deem that long companionship a time of trial of my worthiness to take the place of your murdered lover. And if ye deem on your return from pilgrimage that I be not fit thereto, then will ye have had protection without need of payment. For I deem there may be that in me which may commend me unto ye if ye take time to know me well. What say ye?"

"Meseemeth ye say well," Gathina said. "There may be outlaws twixt here and Ormolnois that honour not the virtue of maiden upon pilgrimage. But it will be

great loss of time to you if I do not find your self as fair as your face would seem to be. For I am compelled to walk upon my pilgrimage for half the way, and ye horsemen will find that pace full irksome.”

“Nay, we’ll walk with ye, sharing fully in your pilgrimage, until that ye may ride,” said the knight, who told her then that his name was Lothorn. And she told him her name. And he asked her how far she had come as yet, and when she told him, he said, “Then is my father’s domain a little less than at the mid-place of your pilgrimage, and ye may ride when ye have gone a few leagues past it. And we have a palfrey there that we may lead for ye until that ye may use it. And ye know not how to ride, I’ll teach ye. Be ye nobly born?”

Quoth she: “Not I. But my lover, that would have married me, was noble, and my lineage was good enow for him. I have never ridden horse.”

“Your pilgrimage can wait, then, surely, while ye learn,” said Lothorn. “For it will be the better sped thereby.”

And he walked beside her, leading destrier, until they came unto the village whereof he had spoken, and there they met his companions at an inn. And he told what he had in mind. And a stark knight named Mardnan, who was a favoured knight of Lothorn’s father, said to her: “Ye will find my young lord a goodly man,

my mistress, and worthy of loving despite the curse that must hide from ye half his face. For once ye deem that cause itself to be not so great a hindrance, meseemeth it will not be hard for woman to find him lovable.”

They stayed at the inn that night, and in the morning they set out for the Shrine of Saint George at Ormolnois, that was beyond the Shrine of Saint Catherine at Forlunnus. And all the knights walked, leading their horses. And Mardnan, that had had the training of Lothorn in the skills and virtues of knighthood, told her many little tales of Sir Lothorn's younger days.

They travelled many days, and Lothorn paid for Gathina's food and lodging on the way, and the two of them talked much together, and Gathina came to like the young knight well. And he grew to love her. And on the day before they reached the large domain of Sir Lothorn's father, Gathina told Sir Lothorn that she loved him and would wed him. And Lothorn made great joy of her.

When they came to the castle of Sir Lothorn's father, that hight Castle Ponolinos, Sir Lothorn and Sir Mardnan brought Gathina to the lord, whose name was Monlinus, and Lothorn told him that he would have her to wife, whereto she was well agreed. And Lord Monlinus asked whether Gathina had seen the whole of his face and loved him in despite of finding it full foul, or whether she loved

him well enough to wed him without seeing all his face. And they told him the latter was the case, and he was not ill pleased, though herseemed the other choosing would have liked him the more.

“And now, my father, I do beg you join with me in seeking have her take up wedded life afore she finish the pilgrimage she is upon,” quoth Lothorn. “For eager am I now to wed her, that I can scarce wait, and the pilgrimage yet is long, and I would not have a penance that was born of love for other man to come between me and my beloved. That other duty may be fulfilled when mine ardour hath been eased, and that meseemeth most fitting.” Then Gathina told her tale unto Lord Monlinus, and he commended her for strength of love, though he said that murder must ever be condemned. And he said he hoped that she would love his son as much as she had loved the man whom she had lost.

“I will, my lord,” said Gathina, with shining smile. “Indeed, I do.” And so they soon were wed, for Gathina said she had no family for to attend the wedding and no father to give or to withhold his leave, but had been ward of her lover's lord, who had disowned her after her trying by murder to avenge that lover, and Lothorn made even greater joy of her when he did lie with her. And when he did, he wore the vizard, not the kerchief, for kissing of her. And Lothorn's Aunt

Dalina, she that had put the curse upon him, told him the next day that when he had got an heir of her who loved him, the curse upon his face would fade and he might show his face in full unto Gathina. And so he said unto Gathina that her pilgrimage should wait until they had that heir, that she might see his face as it should be, before fulfilling duty born of love for former lover. And Gathina agreed thereto. And after eleven months from the time of wedding, Gathina bore a child, and when Lady Dalina came out of Gathina's chamber, she said to Lothorn, "It is a boy." But when Lothorn would have taken off the vizard that he wore, she shook her head and said, most sadly, "This is not the heir." Then was Sir Lothorn saddened much, and he and Gathina wept when he told her thereof. And when the boy was two years old, he sickened and soon died, despite all that could be done for him. And Gathina said that this was punishment for her having delayed her pilgrimage, but Lothorn said it was not so, for only forsaking of penance, and not delaying it, would be a sin. And the chaplain agreed with him. And Lothorn said God would favour, not punish, a woman's seeking to cure her husband of a curse. And she was comforted, and they did seek to have another child. And a year later, Gathina was delivered of another son, and Lady Dalina said, "This is the heir." Lothorn and Gathina were greatly joyous, and Lothorn took off the kerchief he

was wearing, and Gathina saw that he was most exceeding handsome. And Dalina made great joy, and told them she had put the curse upon him that a woman might truly love him for his worthiness and not for handsomeness alone. And she said unto Gathina, "Rare art thou, young woman, and much to be loved." And Gathina and Lothorn said they would go upon the pilgrimage when that the babe was weaned, and so they did, in the spring that followed his weaning, with a score of knights, all the party being upon horseback, for Gathina had learned to ride, and they rode for many weeks until they came to Ormolnois and there beheld the tall statue of Saint George that blocked an opening of cave, wherein evil was said to be imprisoned by that blessed statue.

Gathina told Lothorn and Mardnan it was needful for her penance that she spend the whole night kneeling at the shrine, and she asked them to watch with her and to hold her up if she seemed like to fall forward from her kneeling, or she was nigh overcome with sleep. So the three of them knelt, Lothorn at her right and Sir Mardnan at the left, while the other knights that were with them slept upon the ground, for it was fair weather. So they knelt until near daybreak, and oftimes did Gathina seem like to fall forward, so that they held her up. But the last time that they held her, she made shift to steal their daggers from their sheaths,

and just as dawn was breaking, she stabbed each with the other's dagger, and then made she loud outcry, and said that Mardnan had slain Lothorn, sithen he had long lusted after her and the long night's nearness drove him mad, and she had then slain Mardnan in vengeance in the heat of blood. And she wept and went nigh the statue of Saint George and said, "O merciful Saint George, obtain for me forgiveness of second sin of murder done for love of man that loved me," and she clasped the feet of statue with her arms. But while she did that, she smeared blood of Lothorn and of Mardnan, that was on her hands and arms, upon the statue's stone in certain mystic signs. The great statue all to-shivered, and the cave behind stood open, and Gathina ran therein and saw a great and mighty dragon waken. The dragon said, "It is most kind of you to come to me, who am hungry after my long sleep."

"I must needs come, my lord Gazulforg," quoth Gathina. "There is that which ye should know, which may lead ye grant me boon."

"Ye must know, sithen ye have even my name, that dragons are not renowned for gratefulness," said huge Gazulforg. "And I am much unto the nature of my kind, one of the most notable that bear this nature. And ye can tell me aught would lead me do a kindness to any of the race of man, it will be passing strange,

unless that sought is painful death.”

“My seeking is painful death for some have done me ill, and not loth am I to share it if I may bring it on them,” said Gathina. “I have been loved by man who shared your dragonhood, and he told me much of dragonlore. His name was Osgern, and his sire was Enfarg. And—”

“The name is new to me,” Gazulforg said. “Doubtless he had been hatched while I was sleeping. What hath he to do with me? Be quick about your telling, for I hunger and would be about the countryside to fill my need.”

“Lord Osgern, who lived in the tower called Ordilans, eke hight Dark Tower, which is far south of here, told me of what was done to ye by the mighty wizard Urgothonis, who held ye here by putting spell upon the statue of Saint George that he let make while other magic kept ye for a time asleep. And ye made use of that very spell to keep yourself asleep ungrowing until the spell that held the statue might be broken. And Urgothonis led the folk of hereabout to believe the cave was warded by prayers of St. George at his own asking, that he might help the priests convert the heathen of this place.”

“Too near a mixing of magic and religion is great mistake for men of Christ,” Gazulforg said. “But Christian men of magic were simpler in those days. What



will hap now to the faith of men when I begin again my ravaging?”

“It was I who loosed ye from the spell by making sacrifice of man before the statue of the spell and by signing of the blood of sacrifice upon the statue’s foot,” Gathina said. “I sought no thanks for it, for I know much of dragon-kind. But I bear tidings anent the Gem of Irndolmes.”

Gazulforg then blinked slowly and spoke with gentle care. “What know ye of Gem of Irndolmes?”

“I know that a mighty sorcerer who was allied with dragon did make enchantment on it to help his friend, if friend a dragon may be called, who put some of his own dragonhood therein, to make him mightiest of dragons. For the virtue of the gem enchanted was such that if a dragon having it did defeat in battle another dragon who did fight for it, he would ever be the victor when he fought with other dragons while he had it. And that dragon fought a lesser dragon, who was told the gem was prize of battle, and he easily defeated him and thus became the greatest of the dragons. And if a man should steal that stone and if he then should vanquish any dragon, the gem would work for him as well, to make him mighty dragon-slayer. And a man did steal the gem one time, with aid of magic, while the greatest of the dragons slept, but he never fought with dragon while he

kept it and so did not become the mighty dragon-foe he might have been. And the stone sithence had many owners, but none of them did earn its help in battle, and it came to Osgern my lover. And many were the knights he killed and did devour, until there was a knight who vanquished him and slew him. And that knight knew not before that battle that Osgern had that gem, so that its virtue so far worketh not for him. But it is in the hoard that he doth guard for rightful owners, more fool he, and he may at any time come to knowledge of its power. And if he doth, he need only fight a dragonling to make himself the bane of dragon-kind. It would be well for ye to fight him afore he may do that much, that ye may make yourself the greatest of your kind.”

“Where is the hoard that holdeth the Gem of Irndolmes?” Gazulforg asked.

“It is in the Tower of Ordilans where ruled my Osgern,” Gathina said. “He that slew Osgern and ruleth now there is Roland, that was of Castlemere in England. The last tidings that I had of him said that he was building mighty castle. And he getteth rede of wizard hight Kenduar, an heir of Ordilans.”

“Wizards hold no fears for me unless they know my own most secret name, which none knoweth but myself,” said Gazulforg. “These tidings ye have brought much draw my mind.”

“I know that thou wilt slay me now and that I cannot escape thee,” said Gathina, “but my death will be most joyous if I can know before I die that thou wilt avenge Lord Osgern for sake of Gem of Irndolmes.”

“That,” quoth Gazulforg, “thou wilt never know.” And the sides of his maw, with a twist of his long neck, then closed about her shoulders and her ankles. And she was a tall young woman.

*Lord Roland o’er a Fell Sapphire waited.*

THE SIEGE OF CLOMBENDORN

PART IV: THE PEDLAR'S QUEST

When Gisdan Pedlar came to Clombendorn again, he was expecting to hear that Sir Roland had got guesing of Osgern and had gone his way from that domain, and he was much astonied to find that Roland had slain Osgern and had been given lordship of Ordilans and Clombendorn. But he was the less astonied at hearing Osgern had been usurper, for he had known that some dark power had haunted Tower Ordilans, and he had thought that Osgern might be holder of that power and not its victim only. But he had deemed that that matter had naught to do with him, that sought only honest living by trade and travel. He had gone to Tower Ordilans one time before he heard that it was also called Dark Tower, and had taken no harm therefrom. Wherefore had he deemed the evil power to be no foe of his, and so long as it did no harm to any he knew deserving of naught ill,

himseemed he might well remain on even terms therewith and take his trade of Osgern. So he had kept on going to Tower Ordilans although other honest folk avoided it. He knew not that it was his own honesty, in seeking naught but fair return for his carrying of goods, that kept him safe from Osgern’s wrath alighting on all whose greed would draw their hearts toward the dragon-hoard. And Gisdan deemed that, as he had been neither friend nor foe of Osgern, he might be as welcome now at Tower Ordilans as aforetime. So he went soon to the tower, deeming that Lord Roland might want buy of him some gift for Lady Alyson. For he had divers and goodly wares upon the sumpter horses that followed him.

Gisdan got a better welcome than he had expected, for when he was brought unto the new lord and his lady and his rede-giver the wizard Kenduar, Lord Roland said: “We have awaited ye some time, good Gisdan. But come, have food and drink, and talk with us, and soon we will ask of ye a boon we crave.”

“A boon, my lord?” said Gisdan.

“Aye. I have a task that needeth shrewd and honest trader, and we deem that ye are such. I will pay ye well therefor. But first, have meat and drink.”

“I would wish ye joy, my lady, of the freedom your lord hath gained for ye,” said Gisdan to Lady Alyson as the four did sit at table. “‘Twas an ill captor

wherefrom ye were delivered, though I knew not how ill when I did visit ye aforetime. And so, Lord Roland, ye have lifted the curse of the Dark Tower, so that ‘tis dark no more. Never had I thought to hear thereof, for I deemed the tower was ordained for bane of overweening knights, to rid the world of mighty men grown orgulous and evil.”

“My seeking was not for Dark Tower, as ye may remember,” quoth Roland. “It was that which saved me.”

And so they ate and drank, and as they spoke of lighter things while eating, Kenduar said to Gisdan, “Meseemeth, worthy Gisdan, it is a lonely life ye lead, travelling ‘twixt town and village and castle with but three horses for company.”

“Nay, lord wizard, there be folk enow in village and castle to make up lack between,” said Gisdan. “And if indeed there had not been, then would my guardian angel be company enow upon the road. For I talk to him within my mind and let him know the ways in which the folk I traffic with do seem to me, and I tell to him my pleasure in the shapes and colours of trees and shrubs and flowers on the way, and my delight in fair weather and good wending. And of my memories I tell him and of how they mix with my new findings, and of the gathered meaning they now have for me. Nay, I am not alone upon the road, for

always I have his company.”

“Answereth he your talking?” asked Kenduar. “Nay, I jest not,” quoth he as Gisdan frowned. “In my work ‘tis not unknown that men hold talk with angels or with fiends. Methought ye might be among the men thus favoured.”

“Nay, I am not magician, to dare approach the spirits for use of their high power,” said the pedlar. “Nor am I saint, that the high ones of Heaven should share their speech with me.”

“Meseemeth ye are not so far from sainthood as ye deem, if ye have escaped the ill-willing power that did haunt this place,” said Kenduar.

“It was my simpleness, not sainthood, did keep me safe from that,” quoth Gisdan. “That, and the good will of my angel guardian.”

“Ablings it was so,” said Kenduar. “Ablings the tower’s evil was not so deep as I did deem.” And he smiled.

When they were done eating, Lord Roland said, “Pedlar Gisdan, we have need that ye should get for me the hilt and pommel of this sword.” And he showed him Cleavescale. “This is the sword wherewith I did slay Osgern and thus did save my lady, for it is a sword made in special for dragon-slaying. But it is not what it might be were it to have that hilt and pommel which were made for it.” He told

Gisdan how the exchange of parts was made, and where the hilt and pommel were. Then Kenduar said, "As Cleavescale is now, it is fit for slaying many dragons, but some few dragons are so mighty that Cleavescale cannot kill them without further aid. And that aid must come from dragon. For the sword was made by partnership of mighty wizard and skilled smith, who put much power in it and made it most exceeding sharp, to cut through dragon-armour. But some dragons' scales are proof against even that strength and sharpness, and the wizard and the smith were unable for to better it. But they put with the steel of sword great virtue for holding of dragon-flame, so that if the sword is wielded by a knight against dragon breathing fire, the sword will take into itself all of the heat which flame can give, and may use that heat for a burning cutting of that dragon's scales, be he never so mighty a great serpent. And the hilt and pommel and quillions of the sword were made to withstand the heat the sword would bear then, to keep the knight who wielded it from being burned. And no other hilt and pommel made can do that for Lord Roland now. And such a sword is meant for mighty deeds against fell dragons, and it is not meet that it should be in other state than it was made, lest all its virtue be needed and not at hand. Cleavescale hath its proper quillions but not its hilt and pommel. Will ye seek them for us? For it is



quest the Wise deem needful of shrewd and honest trading.”

“Aye, meseemeth the holder of hilt and pommel might withhold them from the owner of the blade, did he deem that such withholding might make him gainer of the whole,” said Gisdan. “For it might himseem that holder of the blade would fear to keep it without the proper guarding that these parts would give. Let me give thought to this.” And he asked, “How long doth Cleavescale’s blade keep dragon’s fire?”

“Until the striking of three strokes,” said Kenduar. “Nor doth the strength of fire be lessened by striking of the first and second strokes. And if the third stroke be not struck, the fire will stay within the blade three days, unless that certain words be said. These words are kept most secret, lest dragons learn them.”

“It is a mighty sword,” said Gisdan, “and well worth making whole. If I can think of bargain that ought get hilt and pommel, I will undertake the task.”

“Before ye do make promise, I must tell ye that the help of magic in your quest is forbidden by the Wise,” said Kenduar. But Gisdan made promise. Then went they from the table, and Gisdan went about his trading in Clombendorn.

When that Gisdan had done all the trading that he might in Clombendorn, he went again to Tower Ordilans and said to Roland and Kenduar, “I have bethought

me of a bargain, and ye can let make the things I have in mind, that methinks is not like to be gainsaid by holder of Cleavescale's own true hilt and pommel," and he told them what that bargain might be. And Kenduar did clap his hands, and he and Roland went unto a smith, and Roland told Kenduar and the smith all that he could remember anent the sword that had been broken, wherefrom he had taken hilt and pommel to put on Cleavescale. And the smith and Kenduar did work for many days, while Gisdan made many visits to divers friends in Clombendorn. When the work was done, he came and got two things from Kenduar, that Kenduar had wrapped in leather, and he put them into a purse upon his belt, and next day he began a journey east to the far land of Donmorlin, where lived the lord Cilonfilas.

Gisdan travelled far without harm or much of tiring, for he was used to travel, and he never was, for some reason no one knew, much troubled with robbers. But one day he came to the domain of a lord of whom he heard strange things, so that he was minded to leave quickly that domain, but as he was leaving, a score of men-at-arms did come upon him and capture him and take him to that lord, in a great and rich castle, and on the way he learned that that fell lord was a great sorcerer. And the sorcerer said to Gisdan, when he was brought before him:

“Thou hast upon thy body something made by an evil wizard. I must needs know why it was made and where that wizard may be found.”

But Gisdan said, for he feared that harm would come to Kenduar and eke to Kenduar’s lord and lady if he told, “I may not tell ye that.”

“But thou wilt tell me,” said the sorcerer, whose name was Minzord. He took the purse from Gisdan’s belt and found therein a hilt and pommel, and he smelled them and said, “Ah,” and kept them, and bade his men-at-arms take Gisdan to a cell deep within his tower. And he left him there three days, with food and drink and candles he might keep lighted.

On the third day, Minzord came into the cell and said, “Thou knowest what I would have thee tell me. And thou dost tell me quickly, it will be the better for thee.”

But Gisdan said, “I may not tell.”

Minzord had him taken to a torture chamber and had him tortured grievously for nigh unto three days, but it was skilled and subtle torture, so as not to cripple him or maim, but Gisdan would not tell what Minzord wanted. So Minzord left him for seven days, and left him food and drink and candles, and on the eighth day he came and bade him tell what was wanted, but Gisdan would not, and he

had him to the torture chamber and had him tortured for three days, but he would not tell. And so he left him seven days and tortured him three days more, and this ordering of torment went on for many weeks, but Gisdan would not betray his friends. And on one day, that was a sixth day after torturing, while Gisdan was torn between comfort that torture was not yet and dread that it was toward, the torturers came again into his cell and took him to be tortured three days, and then they brought him back into his cell and left him there six days. And ever Gisdan prayed to God and his guardian angel for strength to keep faith with Kenduar and Lord Roland and Lady Alyson. And so that ordering went on, and just as he was beginning to believe that there would be six days between torments for as long as there had been seven days between, the torturers came for him on a fifth day and tortured him three days. And the torturing was subtle to avoid crippling for as much as might be, yet infirmity did come upon his body. And after torturing they left him in his cell. But soon they came on a third day, when he had begun expecting them on a fourth, and still they tortured him three days. But he still kept faith with the friends that he had made at Tower Ordilans. And for a while they tortured him for three days at a time with only one day between the times of torment, and then they left him alone for many days, till he gan hope that he might

be tormented no more but only left to die that he might not warn Kenduar of Minzord. But one day Minzord came to him again and said, "Thou art whole enow again to take worse torture without dying, and it will soon begin again and thou tellest not the thing I need to know." But Gisdan against refused to tell, and the order of torturing began again, to the same ordering as erst but subtly otherwise at times, and Gisdan begged oft for mercy but would never tell the thing the sorcerer did want, and the whole tale of the torment went past four years. Gisdan bore it all with much inward courage though with outward whimpering and pleading and much loud prayer, at which the torturers laughed, and he was much infirm.

At last one day did Minzord come and say: "Thou hast sapped my patience with the use of mankind's torturing. I have been loth to call upon the fiends to give thee pain, for their being used thereto doth much enlarge their power to break the bonds which bind them to my service, but thy stubbornness doth bring that danger now on me and that torment on thyself. Behold what the time to come doth hold for thee." And he took a penknife from his belt and made a cut on Gisdan's arm, and with his finger drew in Gisdan's blood upon the torture chamber's wall a frame as of a picture, and within the frame he drew eyes and nose and mouth, as

of a woman comely, and he cast more drops of blood into the fire that burned within the chamber, and he muttered words that Gisdan might not clearly hear, and the drawing on the wall became face of woman living, who bore a tainted beauty that without its shade of evil must have been deep joy to any hale beholder that might be deemed true man.

“Behold, my lady Alcortha, a worm that thwarteth our designs,” quoth Minzord.

“I know him not,” the lady said. “How doth he thwart us?”

“I found him travelling through my lands, carrying a hilt and pommel that bear taint of magic of House Ordilans, which we had deemed forgotten long ago. I recalled at once old saw: If Ordilans again doth rise, endangered is Alcortha’s prize.”

“Indeed,” said Lady Alcortha. “At least we know now the Wise have kept him hidden all through our long search, till now. How long had ye the worm?”

“More than four years,” said Minzord, and the lady made a grimace most undainty. “I had hoped I need not trouble ye till I had knowledge of Ordilans for gift. Every day whereon I had him tortured, meseemed that he must break upon that day. That long deception giveth me now much troubled thought. And now I

need the devils' aid. And that doth need some help from you, lest the fiends destroy me.”

“I need some time for making ready,” said Alcortha. “Draw upon your wall again at midnight.” Then her face did vanish, and there was no blood upon the wall.

“Thou hast a little time to think on whether thou wilt tell me freely what I need,” Minzord said to Gisdan. “For the fiends' torment, once begun, will not abate until thou art slowly but terribly destroyed, even after giving, as under that thou canst not help but give, the knowledge that we seek. Though it may be that when thou hast betrayed thy friend under such great forcing, the demons will, if they do deem thou heldest any choice in your betrayal under torment, kill thee quickly and take thy soul to Hell for a greater and an everlasting torment. Bethink thee now, for and thou givest thy friend away afore the demons start their work, I will give thee time for to repent before I slay thee without pain, and then thou wilt have but Purgatory wherein to suffer for a time.”

Gisdan spake no word, and he was taken to the cell where he was kept when he was not put to torture, and there he prayed till fifteen minutes afore midnight, kneeling against his bed for his infirmity, asking God to keep him from betrayal

of his friends and eke to take his torment as an offering for the saving of Minzord’s soul. And at fifteen minutes before midnight he heard a step behind him where he knelt with back toward the door, and he quickly turned his head, which moving pained him much, and he beheld a tall young man of great and strange comeliness, who wore a robe of fine grey cloth that seemed to shine like silver, with a long sword at his side and a dagger at his belt.

Gisdan sought rise quickly, but he fell, turning, so that he sat upon the floor. “Who are ye?” he asked the stranger. For that one seemed not like to be a servant of Minzord.

“I am the High Elf Iluelan,” the stranger said. “Your guardian angel, Urenduriel, hath empowered me with might beyond my wont, for your deliverance. It is a task that might be perilous, but I am naught loth thereto, for that I owe your friend Sir Roland much in gramercy for a deed done many years ago upon the border of Faerie, whereon I doubt he knew that he did travel.

“Look fearful,” said the High Elf in low voice, and he went behind the door as they heard outside the steps of Minzord’s servants drawing nigh. And that was but easy task for Gisdan, for he was much afraid. Minzord’s servants dragged Gisdan, who did feebly struggle, to the torture chamber, where Minzord waited, holding in



his left hand the hilt and pommel that Gisdan had carried into his domain.

The servants bound Gisdan to a chair that was carved with strange and fearsome shapes, and Minzord held the hilt and pommel out before the face of Gisdan, while the servants left the chamber, looking back over shoulders and hastily closing door.

“For the last time, wretch, I bid thee say who made this hilt and pommel, and where and why he made them, and where he may be found,” said Minzord.

But Gisdan would not speak. Then Minzord reached out his penknife toward arm of Gisdan, and then was door flung open, wherethrough leaped Iluelan with sword in hand and, as Minzord dropped knife for pointing of finger, cut off the sorcerer’s head. Then he cut bonds of Gisdan with his dagger, and took Gisdan across his shoulders, and Gisdan heard a voice say, “Minzord! Minzord!” and it was Alcortha’s voice, and then Iluelan was setting him upon his feet upon top of hill that looked from far away upon the castle of dead Minzord.

Then said Iluelan, “Take off thy tunic and lie upon the earth, upon thy belly.” And Gisdan did so. Iluelan cut a small sod with his dagger and reached his fingers in the bare spot made and drew out earth, and drew the earth in a long line down Gisdan’s backbone, and Gisdan then was free of all infirmity that the torture had

put on him. And Iluelan bade him stand, and he stood straight. Then Iluelan whistled, and two great horses grey as steel came up the hillside, and Iluelan got upon the back of one and bade Gisdan get upon the other, and he did. They rode swift as wind from Minzord’s lands. And when they were without that fell domain, then Iluelan again did whistle, and a horse of lesser kind came running to them, fitted well for riding, and Iluelan bade Gisdan take that horse, which yet was right good steed. And behind that horse came two sumpter horses, bearing goods that any pedlar would deem good for trading, and one of them bore also food that Iluelan and Gisdan shared. And as they ate, Iluelan said: “It was forbidden that ye be helped by magic in this quest, for that ye have a special friendship with your angel guardian, more than other men do have, wherein no other angel or man may partake in any wise, for that the One hath held that friendship sacred to Himself, sithen ye are among his favoured. But Elves are neither men nor angels, but we are so much at home among the customs of the High that our dealing with them is hardly magic as men see it. Wherefore was your guardian allowed to succour ye through me, the which he had rather do that he might not show himself to ye ere ye can se him as he is and not in likeness of mere man. And he bade me tell thee that thy suffering for thy friends hath

delivered thee from need of Purgatory for the sins of thy youth, and hath earned for thy friends great favour of the One.”

By the time that they were finished eating, it was dawn, and Iluelan gave Gisdan back the hilt and pommel, that he had got in the torture chamber, and Iluelan bade farewell to Gisdan and told him he would have no more danger ere he came to Cilonfilas, and Iluelan rode away toward the West. And Gisdan rode, trading among the folk he met, eastward to the lands of Cilonfilas.

At the end of many days of travel he came to that domain and traded there while on his way to castle. And when he reached the castle, he told the steward that he wanted trade with the lord himself and would see him face to face, and he was brought to where Cilonfilas was sitting before a fire, with knights and men-at-arms about him. And Gisdan said: “My lord, I would trade with ye a hilt and pommel of the sword that ye have borne for these eighteen years past. Methinks ye will agree that the hilt and pommel that I offer are for your welfare more than these ye have.” And he told Cilonfilas anent the sword called Cleavescale, as Kenduar had told him, and then he said: “The wizard Kenduar and his smith have made this hilt and pommel which I bear to have such virtue as will make your own sword, if they are put upon it, to ward of itself any mortal stroke that is

struck against its wielder. It will not guard a man against lesser wounding, but against mortal wounding it will guard. And it will not waste its virtue when a man’s own skill doth ward him with a shield, but it will use its power when that is needed. But the hilt and pommel will have that virtue for only the sword wherefor the wizard and the smith did make them, which is the sword that once belonged to Roland, that now is lord of Ordilans. And I will trade it only for the hilt and pommel that had been made for Cleavescale. Which liketh ye better, the hilt and pommel that ward off mortal wounds or the hilt and pommel that can do no good where now ye have them?”

Cilonfilas said: “Meseemeth it were well that Cleavescale be made whole. But wherefore should Lord Roland not as well send me the blade and quillons, as I send him the hilt and pommel? For then the sword would be as whole as if he had them.”

“Lord Roland hath proved thus far a greater right to dragon-slaying sword, by wielding it right well already,” answered Gisdan. “And the blade is worth more by itself than hilt and pommel are. And fair trade hath been offered, which would do ye great good, while you have naught to lose by giving up of Cleavescale’s hilt and pommel, even did ye make gifts of them unto Lord Roland.”

“That is well said,” quoth Cilonfilas. “Was the making of these trade goods your thought, or whose?”

“It was my thought,” said Gisdan.

“Then it is even more fitting that you should prove the worth of ware ye offer,” Cilonfilas said. “Do you take my sword, with hilt and pommel on it that ye would have me take in trade, and let me strike three strokes at ye with other sword, that my sword may guard ye from them.”

Then turned Gisdan a little pale, but said, “See you, my lord, that the strokes ye strike be full mortal ones, for I have not skill with sword and am not minded to be maimed for your lack of trust in mine honesty and in the skill of wizard Kenduar.”

“I know not that wizard and have therefore no way to judge his skill,” quoth Cilonfilas. He took out his sword and gave it to Gisdan, and Gisdan took off the hilt and pommel thereof, and put them aside, and put on the hilt and pommel that Kenduar and the smith had made by joining of their skills. And he held the sword with point down while Cilonfilas got a sword from one of his men-at-arms and then struck strongly at Gisdan's neck. And the sword that Gisdan held leapt upward and across, drawing Gisdan's hand with it, in a swift warding.

“That was well stopped,” said Cilonfilas. And he feigned two strokes that had

been mortal had they been meant to strike, and then he struck a truly mortal stroke. And the sword in Gisdan's hand hung moveless, though Gisdan flinched, while the other strokes were feigned, but it leapt again to ward the one meant truly mortal. Then followed four strokes feigned and the fifth one truly struck, and the sword again was moveless ere it warded stroke struck sure. Cilonfilas then was persuaded of the virtue of that hilt and pommel, and he took back his own sword and bade Gisdan take Cleavescale's hilt and pommel for Lord Roland. And Gisdan put them in his purse. And he ate and drank that evening at table of Cilonfilas, and slept that night in that lord's castle, and in the morning he set out for Ordilans.

When Gisdan was coming back toward the land that had been domain of Minzord Sorcerer, he turned to travel a long way round aside, lest danger lurk there for him still, for he thought that Alcortha or others might yet seek him there. And in his turning aside from the way he had travelled aforetime, he came unto the lands of a great lord that had a evil custom. For as he travelled through a wood, he heard a scream and then saw run toward him on his path a woman young and fair, with clothing torn, who cried out to him, "O goodman, save me! They follow that would ravish me!"

“Your saving may be beyond my might, and they be on horseback,” Gisdan said. “But take my horses and flee while I delay them, if with cudgel only I may delay them much.” For he thought much haste was needful. And she took the horses and rode on, but she rode but little way and then turned back, where he could not see her if he looked back. And he held his cudgel hard and went forward, and he met four with hoods and vizards, bearing swords, whom he forbade to pass.

“Thou diest for this,” the leader of the foes said then.

“Then I die,” quoth Gisdan. “But ye’ll ravish no young woman while I can stand against it.”

“Who is it, deemest thou, that we shall ravish?” said the leader, and, with throwing back of hood and doing off of vizard, she showed herself a woman, as did the three others. Then the maiden who had sought help came up behind him and said: “Brave man! Art willing still to die to keep me from dishonour, that have had to test thee thus?”

“Any man would die to keep a woman from dishonour,” said the pedlar.

“Not every man,” the maiden said. “Some of the men whom maidens of our band had meant to marry were content to have us in dishonour. But now that thou

hast come to us, that shall be no more.”

“Speak to me more plainly,” Gisdan said.

“Lord Rengerd, that is lord of this domain, doth hold an evil custom,” said the maiden. “He claimeth right as lord to lie with every bride in his domain upon her wedding, that he may seal with what he calleth the honour of the domain the union of his vassals. And his men will not rebel against this custom, which many of them deem indeed an honour unto them, but most maidens of his domain see not the matter so. And each of us who would have wed but whose suitor would not withstand that custom, hath fled into the greenwood, for to make an outlaw band that would withstand him. And we have been told by a wise and holy hermit that when each of our one hundred hath found a man that would die to keep her from dishonour, that evil custom will be made to end. And I that am leader of the band, am last of our fellowship to find me such a man. Are ye still with me?”

“Aye,” quoth Gisdan.

The maiden said, “My name is Niolina.” And she told him the names of her companions, and she bade him go with them to the chief among their hiding places, where the band was then encamped. And on the way, she said: “I have a sister, hight Cathilla, who is being wed today. She dreadeth this dishonour, but



not so much as we do, and she loveth her chosen more than she hateth evil, and she saith her lying with Lord Rengerd will be an evil of short time and her life with her husband a good thing of long lasting, so she is minded to bear with the dishonour. But I would save her from it and I might, but we were not minded to try it unless we could fulfill the hermit’s fair foretelling. For we want not risk capture and ravishing for one who holdeth honour not so high as we do. But now that the foretelling can be upheld, we are strong in hope to save my sister. We have weapons and are skilled in using them.”

“Scant skill have I with weapons,” said Gisdan. “Have only used cudgel and that not oft. But gladly will I wield it in your service, in your lovers’ company.”

“And in ours,” quoth Niolina. “We have not defended ourselves against Lord Rengerd these two years to let our lovers fight now without our aid, though they had rather fight so. And the holy hermit hath said that in this case we must be willing to fight and die beside the men willing to fight and die for us.”

“Then let it be so for once, though it liketh me but little,” Gisdan said.

Then Niolina drew Gisdan aside from the company, and said to him, “Wilt thou marry me when we have won?”

Gisdan’s mouth did open wide. “I have not thought of wedding,” he said then.

“I wander far in trading and am not such that I am bound to wed for keeping of my chastity.”

“Yet I am such,” said Niolina. “And wouldst thou save me from dishonour and yet leave me unto danger of great sin? For I have kept me chaste in hope of getting husband who would cherish virtue, as I see thou dost, and I have kept myself the last among us maidens to gain champion, that I might not long be tempted to lie with him whom I might gain. And if thou who art my champion shouldst set a pride of virtue higher than the welfare of my soul, meseemeth I may despair of gaining lover who also loveth honour, and then may lose mine honour in hope of gaining love. My maidens all have lovers in their champions, and I did hope to have the same. Without this cause to prove him, after we have won, how may I test lover that may come after thee? For I tell thee no man now may content me for a husband but one that proveth himself as thou hast done. Thou needst not marry for thine own sake, but mayst thou not give thyself to marriage but for mine? ‘Twould be a greater deed than that which thou hast promised. Wilt thou stand for me against Rengerd and yet leave me shieldless before Satan?”

“Nay, but if thou dost so greatly need me, I will wed thee when that it may be fitly done,” quoth Gisdan, for though he felt in his heart that there was other

answer he deemed himself not wise enough to find it before he gave great harm to heart of Niolina. “Be content that thy maidenhead will be sought of thee in all honesty.” And he kissed her softly and she was of good cheer. And she said, “My father hath no sons, and the land he holdeth shall be thine own, and we shall live thereon in much joy.”

“Nay, and I must, to keep thee chaste, give up the wandering life I love, I will seek hold lands of Lord of Clombendorn, and thou shalt dwell there with me, and thy father also if he will come, and he shall teach me what he can of usage of the land.”

They waited until the wedding should be done, of Cathilla and her chosen, and then the outlaw women and their lovers went to a place within a wood upon the road between the church where wedding was and the house whereto Lord Rengerd would ride with bride and groom, that house which in his evil sort he deemed that he would hallow. And as the wedding party wended to the house with Rengerd in the lead, the outlaw band stood forth before them and behind, and bade them stop.

“Lord Rengerd, the maidens ye would have defiled by your vile lust have come to put an end unto your evil custom,” quoth Niolina, who with Gisdan stood with

those in front of Rengerd. “Yield ye now to our mercy and swear that ye will leave that custom, or we shall set upon ye and shall slay ye. Ye would die with mortal sin upon your soul, that ye mean unto my sister.”

“It is no sin that I do mean, but a great hallowing by bending of my lordship unto my vassals’ use of love,” said Rengerd.

“That is not the way Lord Christ doth see it,” said Gisdan.

“I will prove unto ye with my body that he doth,” said Rengerd, “and ye do choose a champion to fight in knightly fashion. I have suffered ye to keep the greenwood while ye but fled therein and did not marry in defiance of my custom. But if ye slay me and my party like a band of rebels, then like rebels shall ye be treated. Mine heir and his knights would never rest till ye were hunted out and died a death that fitteth traitors, so that at best ye would get no joy in peace of them that are your lovers. Which of ye shall fight me, man to man?”

“Your threats do daunt us not, but none of us hath had your training and your practice,” quoth Niolina. “We are resolved that ye shall leave your evil custom, whatsoever be the cost to us.”

“Then set on,” quoth Rengerd, and he drew his sword, and the men with him did likewise, and Gisdan saw they meant dearly sell their lives, the which they

might not save without the armour which at that time they were not wearing. And Cathilla and the other women with her drew aside, and the outlaws let them, and Cathilla was weeping for her bridegroom, who stood his ground with Rengerd his lord.

Then was Gisdan ware of a horseman riding through the press of outlaws, to the fore of them, and that horseman rode a steel-grey steed and wore a helm and mail that shone like silver. And the rider spoke, and Gisdan deemed he knew that voice, and the rider said: “Lord Rengerd, here am I to fight with ye in knightly fashion, to prove upon your body that you use an evil custom in lying with your serfs’ and vassals’ wives. And I bid ye get ye shriven of these adulteries and of the sacrilege that you have wrought in receiving of Christ’s body while ye are so unshriven.”

“Who art thou that seemest knightly but standest for these outlaws?”

“The lord Iluelan, son of Ariendiel, am I,” the rider said. And at the name of Ariendiel, Lord Rengerd was white of face. “I am good friend of Gisdan Pedlar, that standeth here against ye for honour of a maiden. Will ye take me as your champion, Gisdan?” All the maidens said they would.

Iluelan said to Rengerd, “Will ye that I do off mine armour now, that we may

fight each other sword to sword, or will ye wait till ye have got your armour, that I may cleave it from ye in proving of my cause?”

“Loth am I to put off long that lying with this bride that I did have in mind,” quoth Rengerd. “Do off thine armour, that we may meet sword to sword, and let us meet on foot, for, as ye may well deem, the horse I ride now is not a charger.”

“So shall we do,” said Iluelan, and he got down from horse and then unarmed him with help of Gisdan. And so stood they face to face upon the road, with outlaws and vassals watching, and then they fought, but fought not long. For Iluelan at first feigned and then did strike so swift a stroke that it did deceive Lord Rengerd and cut his forearm, so that he could not hold his sword but dropped it, and Iluelan put his point unto Lord Rengerd’s throat and bade him yield and confess that he had used an evil custom. And Rengerd yielded and so confessed and he begged pardon of Cathilla for the dishonour he had meant to her. Then was Cathilla much ashamed of that dishonour, and she called Lord Rengerd coward for that he did disown the honour he had meant for her, the which she said she would have cherished. She bade him die rather than disown that honour. And her bridegroom Forzumis, who had believed that Rengerd’s custom brought great honour to his vassals, spoke to him in like wise. But Rengerd said, “Nay, that

custom hath given me great pleasure in its day, but it was, as Lord Iluelan hath proved, an evil custom, and now will I forsake it. For now I grow old, and have less lust, and should begin to make my peace with God.”

Rengerd’s vassals that were near were much wroth upon his speaking thus, but they spake no word. For they at heart were mostly heathen, while Rengerd had but made pretext of heathen custom, which his priests and prelates had feared gainsay.

“Ye must swear that ye repent ye of that custom and that ye will follow it no more, and that ye do forgive these serfs and vassals whom it alone hath raised against ye,” said Iluelan. Rengerd so swore, and then all of the company there gathered went with Cathilla and Forzumis unto house of Forzumis, and ate and drank with them, and put them into bed and left them. And Forzumis was not loth to be the first to lie with her who was his bride, but she was wroth and would not let him touch her till next morning.

Niolina brought Gisdan to her father’s house, and told him that Gisdan was her betrothed lover, and the old man was content therewith. And within the next few weeks all of the maidens of the wildwood were wed to the lovers that had been their champions, for the maidens had for long time had ready all things needful,

and the bishop made dispensation of the banns, and they all made merry in Rengerd's great hall before they went unto their divers houses. And Niolina was of the first to marry, for that she had been their leader and that Gisdan said he needed haste. And when they were come again unto her father's house, Niolina said to Gisdan, "Let us straight to bed, my love, for I am eager for thee." But Gisdan said, "It may not be as now, my dear one. The continence I hold was gained by strongly striving and much long prayer, and if I do forsake it now upon thy body, I shall not be able for to leave thee ere much time had passed. And yet I must leave for to finish my quest that I am on for Lady Alyson and Lord Roland when ye asked me for my help. I would not shame thee by leaving thee without a bridegroom when all thy friends were wed, but I must leave thee maiden wife until this task be done."

"Ye might not have me to your wife when ye come back," said Niolina. "And I be forsaken when I had most looked forward to fulfilling of my need for manhood, I may well seek an annulment of our marriage, for its lack of being sealed."

"And thou dost that, 'twill not be done in all good faith," quoth Gisdan. "For I pledge thee that I mean to seal our marriage well and truly, now that I be thereto



given. And thou dost avoid it of me, thou playest false to one who is but true to thee and also to his friends. I will be back for thee and I do live.”

“Ye will find what ye will find,” quoth Niolina, for she was stubborn. And so they slept apart, and in the morning, after breakfast, he departed for to travel west, and he made all haste to Clombendorn, and it took him many weeks, and when he came to neighbour lands he heard tidings of siege of Clombendorn, and when he did arrive in sight of Ordilans, he found a mighty castle which had not been started when he left, and it was under storm by a great army, and there was a great and mighty dragon flying down toward it from the north.

*Lord Roland o'er a Fell Sapphire waited.*

## THE SIEGE OF CLOMBENDORN

### PART V: THE SIEGE

Lord Roland ran, passing men-at-arms who fought climbers, along the top of inner wall toward where men of Cordimas and Dorlimus came up ladders while the men of Siriand held the wall for them. For Dorlimus and Siriand had fought so fiercely at the first against the men of Cordimas during the three weeks of siege, and in the battles that had gone before, that they were deemed worthy of much trust, and Siriand had been given charge of the middle of the westward inner wall while Dorlimus held that part of outer wall which Siriand did oversee. And they had brought to fruit their treachery which they had planned with Cordimas, and Dorlimus had yielded his part of outer wall to men of Cordimas on berfries, for the foes were using only berfries sithen Kenduar had strengthened the walls against breaking by siege engines, which he said was lawful use of magic among

men who ought rely on weapons wielded with their hands, and Dorlimus turned against the men of Sir Molinios and of Sir Nondolas, who were on each side of him, and Molinios and Nondolas had been slain. The men of Dorlimus had taken the towers that were to each side of their part of wall, so that the men of Cordimas had poured down the steps within that part of wall and were within the outer ward. At the same time, Siriand and his men had taken the towers on the inner wall that oversaw those on the outer, and they were shooting down at the defenders who rushed to battle the men of Dorlimus and Cordimas. And ever grew the number of the foemen upon the outer wall and in the outer ward, sithen the number of foes on other berfries and on ladders was too great for sparing of defenders for to stop them. They got ladders up the outer wall and over, to put against the part of inner wall that Siriand did hold, while some of them did run for to attack the defenders who still fought upon the outer wall. And there was great muddle in the outer ward, which the foes were overrunning. So Roland sought with his men to take the part of inner wall held by Siriand, before the foemen's numbers there could grow, that the inner ward might not be lost. And he had given command that all the defenders of Castle Clombendorn were to withdraw unto the inner ward, while the gate thereof might yet be held open. And while the

outer ward was being taken, he ran along the top to northward on the westward wall, whereunder was a sleeping-hall for men-at-arms, and other of his men came toward that part from northward, and other of his men tried take the steps. Sir Siriand saw him coming and moved to cast down the bridge that was behind the tower that was between them, but bowmen on the ground shot up at Siriand so that he flinched behind his shield and stood moveless, and Roland ran across the bridge. Then bowmen of Siriand who held the tower Roland had just passed would have shot at Roland, but his few bowmen on the ground were shooting back at them and they had much ado in shooting back and sheltering. And Roland's sword was on the side which was open, but Siriand's was hampered by the battlement, that he might but hew mightily at Roland's uplifted shield while Roland struck fast and heavy strokes at Siriand's left side, the most whereof did Siriand ward deftly with his shield, but some few wounds were made upon his side with Cleavescale. Then Roland turned his shield aslant under a downward stroke and, stepping forward, pushed its edge at face of Siriand, who ducked beneath and, letting go of sword, pushed hard at side of Roland. But Roland, who had planned therefor, stepped back. Sir Siriand missed his push and was turned unto the left by might of his own thrust. Roland with shield-arm strongly helped that

turning and pushed Sir Siriand clean off the wall, unto a fall that slew him. But now men of Cordimas held all the outer ward and were climbing ladders all around the inner wall, and there were more men upon this part of wall than Roland and his men could think to win against. But then a wide, swift shadow went over the fighters, and all looked up and all stood still, for a great and mighty dragon was circling above. Then grew the fighting far more fell, for the attackers wanted take the castle fast, for to shelter them from dragon.

When Gisdan came out between the hills that were to east of Ordilans and saw the castle and the dragon, which was yet far off, it came to him at once that he must reach inside of castle with Cleavescale's hilt and pommel ere dragon got there, and he struck his horse with heels and rode at full gallop. And the men of Cordimas, who were but few, that were encamped about the outer wall lest help for Ordilans unlooked-for come, mayhap from not-far-off Cathay, did deem he was a messenger to them with word of some such help. And when they looked for him to stop, he shouted, "I bring aid against the dragon," and he pointed to it, and they looked up and saw the dragon, and they were filled with dread. But when they saw that Gisdan was scrambling up a ladder which was against the wall, themseemed by manner of his going that he was friend to dragon or to holders of

the castle, and bowmen among them drew arrows and bent bows against him, while others ran to pull the ladder down. But a knight clad all in mail that shone like silver, who rode a great grey horse, swept in among them, slaying upon the left and on the right, and Gisdan, hearing sound of battle, turned when he was on the wall and saw that Lord Iluelan the High Elf had come to help him one more time. And Iluelan waved farewell, and so did Gisdan.

Now, when Gazulforg looked down and saw the castle under storm, then was he much wroth with the attackers, sithen himseemed that they were seeking that hoard of which the Gem of Irndolmes was part, which he had looked upon as his already, and also he saw that there were more attackers than defenders. So he circled once above the castle, that he might see where was attack most fierce, and he saw that that was on the westward side of inner wall, and he flew down into the outer ward upon that side, and there he set upon the men of Cordimas. And he flew upon the foes of Clombendorn and on them he breathed fire and burned them, and he smote among them with his great claws and sharp and thereby slew many, and many sought escape up over inner wall and were cut down in their great haste by Roland's men, and many tried flee out the outer gate, but the dragon caught and killed them, and many turned and tried fight dragon, and

among these was Sir Dorlimus, but their swords glanced off his scales and then in vain they tried to flee, save Dorlimus who fought till he was slain. And so Gazulforg made great slaughter among the foes of Clombendorn, chasing them round and round the outer ward.

When Gisdan looked down into the outer ward, he saw men who had been going up the inner wall lose courage as they heard dragon roar from western side of outer ward. And he ran down the steps from outer wall, looking like one amazed that knew not what he did, and so did make his way, unmarked among the fearful, unto a ladder that stood against the inner wall, with no attackers near it, for they had fled. And he quickly climbed the ladder and, as a defender raised sword against him, called out: "I am Gisdan Pedlar! Take me to Lord Roland!" And the man put point of sword against the throat of Gisdan and looked closely at him and saw him who he was. And they ran along the wall, to the right, for the man said Roland was on the other side.

As the dragon slew their foes, the wizard Kenduar came unto Roland, whom now no foes were near, and said to him: "Take off the hilt and pommel of your sword, and hold it by the tang with both your hands, and give defiance to Gazulforg for to fight you for Gem of Irdolmes. And when he breatheth flames

toward you, for he will not know Cleavescale without hilt and pommel that belong to it, then shift your grip unto the quillons, that your hands may not be seared by heat that cometh into blade and tang, and when I make him to be moveless, as I well may hope to do, then do you plunge the sword into his heart, or into windpipe. It will not be fighting that would earn ye use of power of the Gem of Irndolmes, but it will save our lives as now. Ye can earn the power of the Gem against some lesser dragon later.”

“Loth would I be to fight him in full combat with holding of sword by quillons,” quoth Lord Roland. And as Gazulforg made end of slaying men of Cordimas within the outer ward, where he had swept many from their ladders, and gan look about for more of foes before he would seek the inner ward and then fair Tower Ordilans to break its windows and then breathe fire and smoke therein, Lord Roland ran along the wall toward where dragon stood, and then he shouted, “Hail, loathly worm! Dare ye fight for Gem of Irndolmes, that, for all ye know, I may have the ruling of?”

“Ye befool me not,” the dragon said. “I know well ye have not yet fought a dragon for that gem.” And he stood upon his hind legs with his mighty wings well spread, and gripped the battlement with foreclaws, with chest against the wall,



and his tail trailed sixty feet to his right along the ward, and he curved his neck and brought his head, that was fifteen feet long, down upon the inner curve of neck, to look level on Roland and Kenduar, who avoided his eyes, and he smiled, and his fangs were nine inches long and glittered, and he suddenly breathed out fire toward Lord Roland. And Roland quickly shifted hold upon the sword he held before him, to hold it by the quillons, and it took unto itself all of that flame the dragon breathed, and Kenduar called out, "Athliarn kilaln Zormumnug!" The dragon stopped breathing and all his mighty bulk was moveless made, and Kenduar laughed and clapt his hands and said, "Aha! Methought I knew Gazulforg's own most secret name, though sure I could not be whether angel or fiend was teller thereof for good or ill." And then he said, "Now use all your strength to stab him to the heart, for the sword will stay too hot to be withdrawn if it goeth too far in without its reaching heart, and then we are fordone, for even magic using his own name may not hold so great a dragon very long without much making ready."

And Roland made prayer unto God and to Saint George, and made ready to strike as hard as he was able with holding sword by quillons, and then he heard a man call, "Hold, Lord Roland!" He turned and saw the pedlar Gisdan, whom last

he had seen five years ago, running toward him with hand outstretched, and in that hand were hilt and pommel that were like to those which he had left beside that broken sword which long ago was his.

Kenduar took the hilt and slid it onto tang of Cleavescale, and he said, “Aha! It heateth not,” and he turned the pommel onto it, and said, “Nor this.” And Roland brandished sword in his right hand, as Zormumnug wakened.

“That is Cleavescale, is it not?” Zormumnug said.

“Aye,” quoth Roland. “And you have breathed your fire into the blade, which hilt and pommel now withstand. You came here seeking Gem of Irndolmes, mayhap? Nay, move not till we have spoken further.” For the dragon had been starting slowly, the only way that he could move for the way that he was standing, to withdraw, but at these words, with a moving of the sword, he stood again quite still.

“The tasty morsel Gathina, that died to get revenge, did tell me thereof,” said Zormumnug. “It was great temptation to a dragon that loveth peace and quiet, and methought that I might frighten ye into giving it up to me, that I might fight with lesser of my kind to gain the ruling of it and might thereafter live in peace. I meant ye no real harm beyond the loss of gem itself. And I wrought great

slaughter, which ye know much needed wreaking, among them that were your very foes.”

“‘Tis well ye meant us no harm,” quoth Roland, “for ye stand in awkward sort for one that would want fight, with Cleavescale flame-sharp near your heart through base of gullet.”

“And ye stab for my heart, your sword will be no more betwixt you and my flame,” Zormumnug said. “And ye do cut, to bring blade quickly back, ‘twill take two cuts, or ablings even three, to reach the heart, and that leaveth more time yet for flame. Neither of us, methinks, doth want to die, much less in such agony as both of us can give?”

“No man seeketh death,” said Roland, “but a knight can bear it if in dying he may rid the world of a great danger unto many other men.”

“Mayhap the pain of your own flame striking back within might forestall strait streaming of your flame?” said Kenduar.

Zormumnug spake no word. His eyes were glittering, and a man upon the wall that had looked askance into one of these gan move closer that he might slay Lord Roland, but Kenduar was at watch for such a trying and with magic stopped him.

“We have ye at an awkward standing,” said Lord Roland. “And sithen we have

ye thus in danger of Cleavescale by use of magic, it were not seemly that I slay you now, when I have all of Cleavescale's power in my hand. But if I let you free to fight me fairly, ye might hold others hostage to make me put down Cleavescale and fight with other sword, or to make me yield myself for outright killing."

Roland was thinking chiefly of Lady Alyson, who watched from tower window, that Zormumnug might lightly reach if freed.

Zormumnug spake no word.

Kenduar said, "Meseemeth Gathina did make sacrifice of man at shrine of great Saint George, to free you from the spell of Urgothonis?"

"That is so," Zormumnug said.

"That was done because of us," said Kenduar. "And now we have power over ye for that ye sought to bring us harm upon your being freed. Meseemeth ye would have suffered no great loss, but only failed to gain, if because of us ye should find yourself where ye had been long time."

Zormumnug spake no word.

"Is that not so?" asked Kenduar.

"It would seem so, at this seeming," said Zormumnug.

"Then ye ought not withstand unto the death an imprisoning again by us in the

cave behind Saint George's shrine," said Kenduar.

"Meseemeth it may be even so," said Zormumnug. And he sighed a long sigh tinged with flame, that made Sir Roland move a little the sword he held before him.

"Then I desire ye that ye lower neck upon the wall and ope yourself to working of my magic, that we may safely ride ye to the cave," said Kenduar.

"Dare I trust myself within your power?" asked Zormumnug. "May ye not fly upon my neck with sword held ready for to strike?"

"Ye would need only bend your head to throw us off ere man might strike," quoth Kenduar. "Which is more safely done, that a wizard trust a dragon or that dragon trust wizard?" And Zormumnug sighed a longer sigh, that had no flame therein, for he had seen that Roland had much mistrust and was most anxious therefrom and held him ready for to strike, and he did as Kenduar desired.

Then Roland bade Sir Rodoan, whom the fortune of the siege had spared and who had drawn nigh with ready sword during the talk with dragon, take the wardship of the castle while he and Kenduar would now be gone, and they told him what they wanted done, and they got upon the neck of dragon straitly bound by magic made by Kenduar, just behind the head, and Zormumnug got down

gently from the wall and flew away with them. And ere they went unto the shrine which Gathina had destroyed, they went unto the other enemies of King Cordimas and got from them with aid of dragon great promise under oath that they would not attack Dormondinal in this present weakening of his strong armies, for Kenduar deemed that Dormondinal guarded also Clombendorn from those same enemies of Cordimas. Then went they to the ruined shrine, and Zormumnug got again within the cave, and Kenduar worked enchantment on him so that he fell asleep and would stay asleep without need of food until a great stone, that Kenduar let move to block the cave with a binding spell upon it, should be taken away by magic or thereby broken. And when Zormumnug thus was safely bound, Kenduar said to Roland, "Now is our bargain kept, and it would be no breaking of the letter thereof were we to break the binding and ye then fight Zormumnug to the death at cavern mouth with him becramped in rest of cave, by your wielding of flame-sharp Cleavescale."

"That were not well done, methinks," quoth Roland, and Kenduar did shortly shrug. Then they travelled back to Clombendorn by the shortest roads, sithen Kenduar's power was at ebb from so much use, though not too low to keep them from danger on the way. And by that time, the castle had been set to rights by

Rodoan and Lady Alyson, as much as might be after such a siege, and King Cordimas, who had escaped Zormumnug, had been brought by careful skill, in chief of Sir Reltur, to bind himself by oaths unto acknowledgement of Clombendorn’s prized freedom, which he bound himself for to defend so far as his realm when healed might do, and all was well in Clombendorn, as much as it might be. And Gisdan Pedlar was waiting there with much hasty forbearance for Lord Roland, and he told them of his quest and of Minzord and of Alcortha, and Kenduar said, “Of Minzord I knew not,” but would speak no further there anent. And Gisdan asked Lord Roland for land in Clombendorn, which Roland gave him from among the bettered lands of Ordilans as yet ungranted, and Gisdan left and travelled fast to Sarmuen, the domain of Rengerd, where he learned that Rengerd had been murdered by a heathenish vassal for his leaving of his custom, and he found that Niolina awaited him indeed, and great was his reward of earthly kind for the humbleness of his chastity, for Niolina was most lusty wench in bed, and they had therein great joy, each of the other. And they stayed some while, afore they left for Clombendorn, where they lived long with many children.

But on the evening that Roland and Kenduar came back to Clombendorn, Kenduar said to Roland, “Though slaying Zormumnug helpless under magic

would not have gained ye power of the Gem of Irndolmes, yet your bending him to your will while he was waking and aware, no matter how your advantage over him was gained, hath earned for ye the power of the Gem, though I deem he knew that not. Yet, had he known, what choice had he?"

*Lord Roland o'er a Fell Sapphire ruled.*



BOOK IV

THE SIEGE OF ALYSON

PART I: THE LADY’S WAITING

“My lord! Thou dost forget thyself and that which might be lost—”

“Fain would I forget myself and lose myself in thy fair body, madam.”

“Why seekest thou persuade me, Roland? That knowest thou needst make but mild command and I’ll to bed with thee right gladly.”

“‘Tis not a lover’s place that he command his love, but that he sue her as a commoner sueth queen for justice in his cause. Wouldst thou make me less a lover than a tyrant?”

“Nay, thou seekest have thy pleasure of me without the burden of the choice that must be made. Thou leavest that burden on my back.”

“It is upon thy front that I would have thee bear my burden,” Roland said.

Kiolietha the serving-maid went quietly back down the stair whereby she had gone to tower's top on errand to Lady Alyson that now she had forgotten, and so she heard no more. "Methinks he'll take her on the roof," quoth she to Nirmia, another servant. "He seemeth right desirous of her now." For the tale telleth now of what the life was like at home of Lord Roland and Lady Alyson from the time that they were wed until what happed at Ordilans about a year beyond the siege of Clombendorn by Cordimas, that the dragon Zormumnug raised. And that talk of which the tale hath just now told was made about three months past the wedding, and Alyson had yet her maidenhead. And at times, thereto and long thereafter, Roland was minded to have it of her but she would not, and at times she would have yielded it but he would have it not. And this dispute of theirs had come to be a common knowledge of the household, and therefrom to all of Clombendorn, and eke beyond, for there came to be songs that were sung thereof, that Roland and Alyson never heard, so that the first question asked when folk that were without met those of Ordilans was, "Hath he had her yet?" And the answer oftimes was, "Methinks not, but they seem so oft to be of one mind and feeling, that it be hard to say." But oftimes also the man or woman who had answered thus would later say unto himself or herself, "Nay, they share not bed as yet." And oft did Roland

go into his lady's chamber late at night and come out in the morning looking balked and then sleep half the day, and sometimes did Lady Alyson go into her husband's chamber and come out looking angry in all coldness while Roland watched her, grinning. But it was somehow known throughout Clombendorn that neither did outright deny the other, but only talked the other into leaving of having meant that they lie together. For all the wide domain believed that it was but a game between them, to see which could hold out the longer or be skilfuller in courtship. But it was not mere love disport for Alyson and Roland, but a cherishing and a heartening of one another for the upholding of fulfilment of Merlin's design, that Kenduar had said was toward. So there was oft a merry discord in that household.

And so time passed, and the building of Castle Clombendorn was begun, and therewith the restoring of the upper two storeys of Tower Ordilans, and in the third storey Lord Roland let build a chapel, by rede of Kenduar, according to instruction that Kenduar said he had got from the Wise, so that the chapel was builded and furnished in likeness of one that had been there before those storeys of the tower were destroyed. That first chapel had been built and blessed by Saint Althemis after he had converted the folk of that land, who were not common

heathen but even devil-worshippers who made sacrifice of children. And in that chapel had Saint Althemis been murdered, by a devil’s servant who would not be baptized but feigned seek knowledge of the Faith. And Kenduar said that the blessing of that new chapel, wherein the Sacrament was kept and which had its own chaplain for the castle, did hallow the whole tower. And Roland for a time was all taken with the work of castle-building and went to bed more tired than he was wont, and so left for a time his suing for his lady’s maidenhead. And Alyson was well pleased therewith, for she had come nigh to giving in, and she did take that time of grace to school herself more strongly against the bodily desire she was feeling for her lord. And when the work was well toward and Roland less taken thereby, she was strong again in spirit to make argument against him. And so that merry discord went forward as it had erst, for much long time, until the castle was finished. But then came word that Cordimas was gathering an army for to make attack on Clombendorn, and Lord Roland made ready to do battle against King Cordimas. And on the night before he left to try to hold the western march of Clombendorn, Lady Alyson said unto him: “My lord, thou mayest die in battle now, and I would then that I could be ever mindful of our sealing of the love that is between us. Share my bed this night.” But Roland said: “If I be slain, there

needeth a new lord of Ordilans, if indeed it stayeth free, and thou must either be his lady or leave the wardship to another if thou dost keep thyself alone in memory of me. If the first be what thou dost, I would have thee give thyself a maiden to him will raise thy children. If the other, I would have thee keep forever in thy memory the forbearance we have so long shared, rather than a bodily delight that would have been cut short. Besides, bethink thee that the legacy of Merlin’s power and design may serve to keep me safe in battle if we do strive to serve it.” And so they shared not bed that night, and Alyson was much wroth, but Roland marked it not, albeit her women did, and after short time she kept her feeling hidden. And next morning, Roland went forth to fight King Cordimas upon the western march of Clombendorn, and there he and his knights and all their men-at-arms made mighty battle and made much loss of men of Cordimas, but slowly their much smaller army was forced back, fighting, across the land of Clombendorn, which Cordimas did largely spare, sithen he wanted for his own that fair domain and for his men the dwellings fair thereof, the like whereof was not found in Dormondinal. So came the siege to Castle Clombendorn, the which Zormumnug Dragon raised, as erst the tale hath told, and then was the power of King Cordimas well broken for a time and Clombendorn kept free. And when he

came back to Clombendorn from the cave wherein Kenduar did bind Zormumnug, Lord Roland said to Lady Alyson, “Lo, now we are at peace again and may live in merry discord as erst. Wilt thou be the hunted first awhile, or shall I?”

“I’ll seek thy body not again,” quoth Alyson. “Thou hast had more feeling for a new lord of Ordilans, which now it will not have, than thou dost have for me. Then let him who stayeth lord of Ordilans content himself to lie with a new lady, when that the old hath died. For and thou agest not until thou hast my maidenhead, thou’lt never age, unless thou dost enforce by stern command thy right unto my body.” Then she turned away and went into her chamber.

Roland said to Kenduar, “What have I said amiss?” But the wizard said, “That is a thing that ye must see by your own seeing.” And Alyson after that was cold unto Lord Roland, who forebore to plead with her and was too proud and kind to make command of her. And Alyson thereafter did grow a little proud of long-kept maidenhead, which theretofore she had held in all humility.

*Lord Roland with a Fair Lady dwelled.*

THE SIEGE OF ALYSON

PART II: THE LORD’S WAITING

Now, Alyson was not relentless unto Roland, but only wanted him to see his fault and ask pardon therefor. As time passed, she would have been content had he but asked her what his fault had been. But Roland only said unto himself, “This is what cometh of marrying old maids,” and kept himself but coldly courteous toward her, while inwardly he burned for her fair body and for the gracious spirit he had known theretofore. And as the folk of Ordilans saw that the breach between their lord and lady was wide and like to be kept open, some serving-maids gan deem that they might gain more favour from their lord than mere lordly kindness might bend him toward. And he, in hope of making Alyson through jealousy relent, did much, by way of gazing and attending, to further them in that hoping. And Alyson grew more proud of what she deemed was her

forbearance from but fleshly lust, which these maids were showing to their lord, and she came nigh to scorning Roland and was harsh toward the maids, so that Tower Ordilans oft was not a pleasant dwelling-place, and the rest of Castle Clombendorn but hardly more so.

Roland sometimes thought that Alyson but feigned her coldness unto him, sithen he conceived naught of ill in his behaving unto her, so that she might age and he might not, until their bodies were more of equal aging, that they might be of greater comfort unto one another. But when betimes he felt that he should broach to her that thought, the upholding whereof he would have welcomed for its kindness, there was that in her look which quelled him. And so he abode with her in great ill ease at best, and oft in agony of spirit.

As they dwelled thus for many months, Lady Alyson grew closer in her friendship unto Kenduar, and spent much time with him, and they talked much of lore and of the nature of mankind, but never were where aught untoward might be thought anent them. And when she was apart from Kenduar, Alyson spent much time in chapel, that Roland had let make by rede of Kenduar, and there she prayed that Roland would leave his flattering of servant maids and seek to know the wrong that he had done, so that she might forgive him, and all be as it was, or



even that he might ask to be forgiven without knowing, for that to her now would be enough. But the thought came to Roland that she might be praying for deliverance from an unworthy lust for Kenduar, and that thought made him wroth, and almost he believed in it, but he had much trust in her virtue. But after that thought came other, that Kenduar might have put on him the spell that forestalled aging, only that he might be tempted to withhold himself from Alyson much longer than was needful, and to that thought he leaned more than to the other. For he said unto himself that Kenduar was not blind.

*Lord Roland with a Fair Lady dwelled.*

THE SIEGE OF ALYSON

PART III: THE WIZARD'S WAITING

When Kenduar beheld the coldness of Alyson to Roland, he did at first feel pleased somewhat, sithen he believed there was more safety for her maidenhead therein than in her erstwhile warm withstanding of her lord. For he had ever feared that their kindhearted quelling of each other's desire must end some time in wreck of Merlin's plan. But when some time had passed, he felt that their estranging might be lasting, and that did sadden him, for he wanted much their happiness together, which was of a kind denied to him while he did stay a wizard. But he was glad yet of Alyson's closer friendship with himself, for there were no others at Ordilans with whom he might talk anent those things wherein he had most learning, and he delighted in discoursing with her thereof, unto which she had some bent, and her quick wit did sometimes make joinings among lore which

had escaped him. And one day they did find out together a truth anent the mind and feelings of man, whereof the Wise had not told Kenduar, nor had he found it for himself, and they embraced together for mere fellowship of mind, and in that embrace did Kenduar's feelings change, and he became enamoured of the lady of his lord. But he saw in that a leaning toward a failing some had said that even Merlin shared, and a temptation to the sin of Launcelot, against which he was resolved to keep his soul. But the want of sealing of his lord's and lady's marriage caused him pain, for he knew that while the marriage stayed unsealed, there could with seeming of some likelihood stay open to him the hope of gaining his desire without sin. And he knew within his heart that that was but a forlorn hope, sithen Alyson's heart did burn and sigh for Roland and her feelings toward Kenduar were free from aught like love of maid unto a man. For Alyson gave no thought unto the manhood of Kenduar, and that was grief to him, but he did deem it lucky, for had she given thought thereto, she had seen the way he felt toward her, and their both knowing it would have made it plain to Roland. And Kenduar felt that Roland's knowing thereof, when he thought anent Lord Roland's feelings then, which Kenduar beheld more clearly than did Alyson, was a thing well worth avoiding. For Kenduar knew he could not without great peril unto Alyson leave

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Ordilans at that time.

*Lord Roland with a Fair Lady dwelled.*

THE SIEGE OF ALYSON

PART IV: THE SIEGE

One afternoon as Alyson and Kenduar sat at ease in Tower Ordilans, for that was an idle afternoon, and Lord Roland was out riding, a raven came and perched upon a windowsill that was across from Kenduar, and made to him some of the subtle sign-making of ravenkind, and Kenduar said to Alyson, “The Wise have made me know that the time of trial cometh. Be of good cheer and to thy love be true. The trial will soon pass.” And he went unto his chamber and brought forth a harp of ivory that had white strings. And Alyson said, “I have not seen the like of this harp’s strings.” Kenduar said, “They are of the manes of unicorns.” And he played upon the harp, but Alyson heard no sound, but far away, to north and south and east and west, there were ears that quivered and then bent forward when that the harp was played. And Kenduar sang, and Alyson saw by the moving of his

hands that the song he sang, which she could hear, accorded well with that harp's melody she could not hear. And he sang:

“The world's eldest maiden  
With beauty's still laden:  
Of powder or painting  
Her face hath no tainting.  
Slender and stately,  
Neck bears head sedately.  
Hair shining of old  
Doth lover behold.  
Breasts I may praise  
Strong children shall raise  
When soon her denier  
Hath had his desire.  
But all of her charms,  
Though meant for man's arms,  
Are yet unembracèd,  
By lover untracèd,

Who now will not linger  
Should she crook her finger  
For changing her life's way  
From maiden's to wife's way."

When he had done singing, Alyson said, from hearing of the tone wherein he sang, which he had been unable make other, "Thou lovest me as more than friend."

"Aye," said Kenduar. "And Roland hath loved thee longer. It was not of lord who might be that he was thinking when he kept him from thee, but of thyself, that thou mightest keep the greatest gift that thou canst give, that might make thee as great a treasure to another as thou has been to him, if another were needed to guard thee as he hath done. Methinks 'tis still some slight to thee, as women see these things, but not so bad as thou didst deem."

Alyson looked long time at Kenduar. "Methinks I will forgive him," she said then.

"That will be well," quoth Kenduar. "I can delight in his joy of thee as if it were mine own. The greatest pain unto a lover is that his beloved be not enjoyed at all, not even in forbearance that she deemeth welcome. But tell him not thereof

till bedtime. Ye will have a guest to supper.”

Soon Roland came in and found them sitting thus alone and an unworthy thought did come to him, but he banished it and smiled on them the smile of fellowship, and he was surprised and warmed by the smile which Alyson gave back to him, which himseemed was a smile of more than fellowship, but then she did turn cold again, and at that, though it might be from habit only, he was again made stern against her. And so he made talk with them that was of cold courtesy to Alyson and warm friendship unto Kenduar, until supper was made ready.

When supper was being put upon the table, a crone came to the castle gate and craved leave make music for the lord and lady in return for food and lodging, and she was brought into the tower and came unto the table and sat down, and it was seen that she bore with her a harp kept in a case. And meat and drink were put before the crone, who said her name was Indulia, and she partook with Roland and Alyson and Kenduar. And when the meal was done, she said to them, “And ye will allow, I shall play ye now a melody the like whereof ye have not heard.”

“That, methinks, would please us much,” said Roland, and their chairs were moved that they might sit near the fire. And the crone took from her case a harp made all of ebony, that had black strings, and she put on thumb of her right hand,



in such wise that Kenduar might not see it until she had begun to play, a ring of metal black that had in place of gem a smooth flat round of ivory. And with the ring upon her thumb she gan play harp.

The melody played by crone seemed innocent but empty unto Alyson, but in Kenduar it raised dark thoughts of lust, and in Roland high thoughts of noble sacrifice of self, which drew him strongly.

And far away, but not so far as heretofore, there were other ears that heard, and there was galloping of hooves which belonged to those that heard, the music.

And as the fell black harp played on, Kenduar, by strongly striving, so himseemed, gan stifle thoughts of lust and rose to thoughts of noble courtly love, that a man might have toward the lady of his lord. And he forgot himself in dwelling within thought upon that love's nobility, that in itself it had when undefiled by lust, and he deemed his love for Alyson was nigh a perfect thing. And then he gan regret, not for his own sake, but for perfection of the noble love he was beholding in himself, that his high love should lack its fulness by falling short of bodily fulfilment. And his regret did grow into a noble sorrow.

The fell black harp played on, under subtle fingers of the crone that seemed have no aging in her hands.

Roland, looking on Alyson and in her face where now was warmth renewed, gan dwell in thought upon the anger he had raised when he did speak of keeping her maidenhead for lord of Ordilans that might have been. And his thoughts were not now diligent upon that cause but idly drifting with the music, and as he sat thus thinking almost as in a dream he had a sight of that matter as Alyson had seen it, and he was ashamed. And he recalled that Kenduar had seemed to have a clear beholding of it from the first, and the thought came to him that he was but unworthy lover unto Alyson, and that Kenduar would make for her a fitter husband and not grieve her as Roland had done.

And the fell black harp played on. And the other ears that heard strained forward, as if they would draw after them more fast the hooves that galloped.

Alyson saw Roland's love as he did look at her, and she bethought her of her coldness and the pride that had grown in her of her long-kept maidenhead, and she was ashamed of it and eke afraid the pride would grow, that is the root of sin. And she was resolved it should not grow and that she would not wait for time of trial whereof Kenduar had spoken, that would come before fulfilment of Merlin's grand design, but would forsake all pride and would command that night of Roland that right unto his body that their wedding gave her. And so resolved, she

felt at peace.

And the fell black harp played on.

Kenduar gan feel that a perfection which was due the world would be denied if his love for Alyson lacked bodily fulfilment. And he felt his wizard's lore and power would be but wasted if they failed give the world that noble gift. And his mind devised a way it could be done, by a device that wrought great winning once before. The more part of his will withstood so far that fair devising, yet his mind worked onward therewith. Himseemed that it were passing good that he take on a likeness of Lord Roland and give his own likeness unto Roland, that Kenduar might lie with Alyson. And he was minded unto doing it that night, for he beheld the bending of Alyson unto Roland now.

And the fell black harp played on.

The thought came into Roland's mind likewise that Kenduar might exchange for them their likenesses and lie with Alyson, and the thought did seem to him most fair. For himseemed that that would be a noble sacrifice for him, but his will thus far withstood what seemed to him the sin thereof. But he recalled that Uther Pendragon had sinned to lie with Igraine and therewith had got King Arthur, so he felt there might be mortal sins which needed not much pardon. And himseemed

that this sin might be less great, in that the wedding of him and Alyson had not been sealed by body. And himseemed that when he and Kenduar would later show to Alyson what they had done with her, she would be minded more unto forgiving Kenduar than Roland and so choose Kenduar to be her lover and her husband. For Roland deemed it might be easy get annulment of their marriage, sithen Alyson would not then be maiden for her wedded husband.

The fell black harp played on, with music more enticing.

Kenduar prayed that he might hear soon the hooves he hoped were galloping, for behind the fair seemings in his mind he knew what was toward, and beneath fair seemings he had dread.

Roland knew in his heart that God maketh no exception from his laws anent men's sinning, but the music whispered in his ear that if his will were overmastered there would be no sin. And he knew that that was true, but yet he strove not to pray, as music tempted him to pray, that his will be overborne. And he prayed he might hear other sound than that fairseeming music.

The harp sang then to Alyson of the delights of her fair body, that soon her lord that loved her would well enjoy, and she looked forward to his enjoying them. But she knew not that the music spoke thereof, but herseemed the thought came of

herself and that the music had no meaning for her, and she wished that it were ended, that she might to bed with Roland.

And Kenduar and Roland turned from looking upon Alyson and looked toward each other, and each beheld that they did think alike, and the thought came unto both that they might go into a darkness of the hallway, excusing them by nods for a moment from their listening, and then come back, each in other's likeness, to sit again, each in other's chair. Thereto the music strongly urged them, and the music made them feel that and they moved not thereto, it would never let them again move else, and to agree therewith were they now strongly drawn.

And still the fell black harp played on. But now there came to ears of Kenduar and Roland a subtle, far-off drumming sound that mingled with the music and made its drawing seem less strong. But that sound came not to ears of Alyson, who was looking hard at Roland, nor of the crone, who was bent upon her music.

Still the subtle drumming grew, and still the crone did hear it not, until at last the castle trembled and then shook hard, with a quivering throughout the tower that suddenly was stilled. And the crone looked up in terror, and the others now all stood.

“The unicorns have come!” quoth Kenduar, as he leaped up and bent upon the

crone a look from which she quailed. Now was it seen that she was young, of a youth that looked to Roland nigh akin to Alyson's when first he saw her on the tower's steps, but with a glamour that was yet ill-favoured. "They have leaped the outer wall and then the inner and put their horns against the tower walls, on north and south and east and west," quoth Kenduar. "Thou art caught among the unicorns, Alcortha Arthur's-bane, on a holy battleground of good and evil, and I can strip thee of thy power." And then he uttered words which Alyson and Roland afterward dared not repeat, though never they forgot them, that resounded deep and loud within the tower's rounded walls, and Alcortha was crone indeed, and the strings of the crone's harp broke and the metal of her ring fell into powder on the floor, and Kenduar picked up the ivory and kept it.

"Begone," said Kenduar.

"The unicorns will slay me and I go out while they are here," Alcortha said.

"They will not defile their horns with thy foul blood, and thou be powerless," said Kenduar.

"Dost thou swear it?" asked Alcortha.

"I swear it," said Kenduar.

"By the Ring of Wine and Music?"

“By the Ring of Wine and Music.”

Alcortha put her stringless harp back in its case and was let out of tower door, and went down the tower stair. When she would have been upon the ground, they that were in tower heard a fearful scream, that was cut short by trampling like thunder.

“I said not that they would be so dainty of their hooves,” quoth Kenduar. And when he saw how Alyson and Roland looked at him, he said, “She could have gained her power back, and eke her long-kept youth, had she escaped the unicorns. She knew not that that was known to the Wise. But now the earth is safe from her and, for a time, from those who had been leagued with her. Merlin’s revenge hath been fulfilled.”

“How so?” said Roland.

“Let us sit again, and have more wine, and I will tell ye thereof,” said Kenduar. And when they were drinking, he said: “Alcortha was the chiefest enemy of Logris in this age. She was the power, unseen by most, that was behind Morgan le Fay and Mordred. By her means was Merlin in his younger days beguiled into having Arthur begotten by adultery instead of leaving that begetting to God’s good providence, which had ordained it well. That adultery was grievous sin for

Uther and gravely touched the magic that Merlin was to wield for Logris. For magic is as it were the shadow of religion, that sometimes doth play upon the world, sometimes for good and betimes for ill. White magic, which is the use by men of power of the angels, as I have told to ye aforetime, is as the bright shadow of the Grace of God, and black magic the dark shadow of mortal sin. But magic in very use is most times neither wholly white nor wholly black, for reasons I have told ye. And how the very throweth the shadow, the elder wizards and the doctors of the Church can only guess. But sure it seemeth that sins by certain men, that are favoured much of God and have great gifts, have dark effects besides those that flow from them by nature. Most men sin in seeking of things that in themselves are good but ought not be sought for their own sake, but some do sin in seeking evil for the sake of evil, as revengers seek death of evil-doer for sake of death unto a foe and not for sake of justice that itself will oft demand a death, and these sins make great increase of Satan's power in the world. But even sins done in our seeking of lesser but real good, in despite of God's high will, do have their ill effects upon Lord Jesu's Body Mystical. Such sins were Uther's in lying with Igraine another's wife, and Arthur's in sending the children on the sea, and Launcelot's and Guinevere's love adulterous. These sins, besides that they



divided Arthur’s fellowship and made weak his rule on earth, did make less the standing of Logris in the realm above and about us. But had Logris at that time prevailed, there had been white magic long thereafter to breathe through all of England, in a fair time of Grace abounding. And when Merlin saw that Logris could not prevail as God had meant, and that a balance only could be struck between his power and Alcortha’s at that time, he devised a plan whereby he might forestall Alcortha when that her power grew again. But he might not carry forth that plan himself, for he was destined to be put into the earth asleep, that he may arise for the saving of Logris in a far-off age to come, that will be not long before the finding of Excalibur. And some among the Wise have said the destiny of Morgan is joined unto that finding. And so Merlin feigned himself assotted of Nimue and made himself a trouble to her, and she by rede of Alcortha that was made through Morgan did use against him an enchantment, that he without her knowing it did subtly alter to his advantage, to prison him within the earth still quick, the which she did regret when it was late, and so Alcortha deemed that she had gained defeat of Merlin, the only wizard that she really feared. But Merlin knew of the bargain that Alcortha had struck with the dragon Osgern in this land so far from England, for she hath allies in every land, and he made use thereof for

her undoing.

“Lord Angoren of Ordilans was a great stumbling block for Alcortha’s allies in this part of Earth, who numbered dragons among them, and it was for hand of Angoren that Cleavescale was meant when it was forged. So Alcortha made pact with Osgern for the death of Angoren before the sword could come to him. She lent Osgern, who was but a lesser dragon, sithen she trusted not much the greater ones, much power therefor, and thus it happed twixt Angoren and Osgern as ye have heard aforetime. And there was an old foretelling that if a sorcerer or sorceress should wreak defilement of the world’s eldest maiden of her time, in a holy battleground of good and evil, that wight would gain a dark dominion over many lands of men for many scores of years, and many souls might thereby be got for Satan’s feeding. And so it was for gain of both Alcortha and Osgern that they keep their alliance after the taking of Ordilans, for if Osgern could defile in Tower Ordilans the eldest maiden of the world, by use of power that Alcortha lent, they would both get what they did want therefrom.

“Alcortha helped Osgern Dragonheart seek out hale maidens of strong will, that their defilement might be later and more foul. But none of those he captured would yield their wills to Osgern, though one of them indeed was at her death the

eldest maiden of that time within the world.

“Now, Merlin had, when he was at your father’s castle, Alyson, a foresight of your virtue and your destiny, and so he set the spell on you that kept your body from growing older, for there was another foretelling, known by but a few among the Wise, who kept it from Alcortha, that the world’s eldest maiden would one day save many lands from dark dominion of black magic. And so he chose you for the eldest maiden of this age. And he left with the Wise good rede for the heir of Ordilans to follow in trapping of Alcortha.

“Alcortha waited so long for Osgern’s help that she became unmindful, for a time, of the agreement they had made and of the aid that she had hoped to get therefrom, and so she worked upon her own devices for gaining of much power. So it was that Osgern was overthrown by Roland without her knowing thereof and she was kept unknowing of my return to Ordilans, until her ally Minzord found on Gisdan Pedlar the hilt and pommel I helped make. But thanks to Gisdan’s courage in bearing of much pain, she knew not of what had happed, until songs and other tidings gan spread anent the siege of Clombendorn and the prisoning again of Zormumnug, and our having used the dragon to keep peace, and also songs reached England at last anent the maiden wife of Ordilans. For the Wise had kept

us shielded from the getting of knowledge anent us by magic. And when Alcortha had learned of us, she was resolved to wreak defilement by her own means of Alyson, through ye, Roland, and through me. For had we done as we were tempted – which was to take likeness of each other, Alyson – we would have done again the sins of Uther and of Launcelot, which Alcortha deemed would give might to the defilement.

“However, that defilement would have been in seeming only, for, as Osgern said to Alyson, a woman cannot truly be defiled unless she lend her will thereto, which Alyson would not have done, so great her virtue and her love of ye, for her only meaning in lying with thy likeness would have been to lie with ye, as is most right. Being deceived is not itself a true defilement. But Alcortha was past remembering of that and deemed defilement to be made of a wreaking of dishonour in outward seeming, the which alone might cause distress unto herself if done to her, and so she was undone, the weapon lent by Satan turning in her hand. And so the wars that may be fought in Clombendorn and in the lands around, and eke in far-off England, will for long time be only wars of men and not be waged by demon-serving sorcerers. Though wars of men can still serve Satan, even as they make strong the brave in God’s good service. But it will take time

for the sorcerous to gather strength again, and in that time the power of the Wise can also grow. And so we three have passed the test that was set for us this time and can pray that we be set not others. I could not tell to ye the nature of the test, for had ye refused the temptation early, the unicorns had not arrived in time to catch Alcortha. I had much trust in your strong virtue. I hope ye will forgive me that I put it to the test.”

“Methinks we can well pardon ye,” quoth Alyson, and so said Roland also.

And Kenduar said: “That is good to hear. And now ye may to bed, and whether ye will to bed together, or whether ye will keep for a while that merry discord ye had aforetime, mattereth no more to sleeping Merlin.”

Roland went and knelt by Alyson. “I would look upon thy breasts by candlelight for half an hour,” he whispered.

“And then belike, or sooner, thou’lt put thy sword-beroughened hand upon them,” whispered she.

“It is my duty that I claim them for the children thou wilt suckle,” he made answer.

“I pray ye pardon me,” quoth Kenduar. “I would go upon the tower’s top to look upon the unicorns, for meseemeth they will not be with us long.” And as he

went out toward the stair, he heard Lord Roland say, "Soon shall my privy tree of life be rooted fast, in that fair garden Father Adam kept beyond the Fall."

"Soundeth trite to me," said Kenduar unto himself, "but to a hundred-forty-year-old wedded maiden kept young in body and in feeling, that long hath been at odds with her bridegroom of six years, meseemeth it may well savour of new tidings. And indeed my bridal song for them, which Roland did not hear, was not high poetry, though it did bring the unicorns."

He went up the stairs and out upon the walk above, and saw beneath him the Unicorn of the North, where it lay waiting in the inner ward, and thereby he knew the other unicorns were waiting also. And himseemed that Roland had much to say, with words and hands, to Alyson, for it was not until an hour later that the Unicorn arose and was three times rampant, in honouring the chastity of wedded maiden at last made wife in deed, and then did turn and overleaped the inner and the outer walls, and then all four did gallop toward the corners of the earth, whence they had come.

"Methinks I will forsake my wizardry and marry," quoth Kenduar unto himself. But he meant it not.

*Lord Roland with his Fair Lady lay.*

BOOK V

THE RETURN OF THE DRAGON

On the morning after Roland and Alyson first lay together, Wizard Kenduar said when they sat down to breakfast: “My lady, I had a flash of foresight given me last night just after the unicorns did leave, wherein was I made to know, though how and why the High Ones did not show, that it were well that ye took up the art of sword and learned it well. And sithen ye be not with child, for I was made ware ye will not be so for a time, methinks it were well that ye begin at once.”

And so, when they were done the meal, Roland and Alyson went down unto the inner bailey, and he gave her a sword to wield until a smith might make for her a sword to be her own, and he showed her how to cut against the pells, and how to ward with sword, and they practised therein that day and all days thereafter,

except for holy days, and Alyson showed gift thereto which Roland deemed was like to make her greatly skilled therein. And she gan slowly become used to wearing of armour also.

On a day when Roland and Alyson were working hard together at sword practice, so that each was getting somewhat desirous of the other, the lady Sethlinia and her son Elmonfilon came to Castle Clombendorn and asked a boon. Sethlinia said, “Sithen my lord had proven traitor, against my will and rede most strong, that I thought he would follow sithen he had so promised me, I do beg, my lord and lady, that ye should have his son and mine, to learn from ye to whom he ought give loyalty, the loyalty that ought grow greater in him. I ask that you, Lord Roland, and you, his lady, should have the son of traitor Dorlimus and me his wife, to rear beyond his present age as if he were your own. Thus may both my son and I hope to make amends for his father’s treachery.” For Roland had not held forfeit the lands of Siriand and Dorlimus, though Sir Reltur had counselled it, for their treachery. And Elmonfilon, a boy of fourteen years, said eke that what his mother wanted was his own great desire. So Roland and Alyson took Sethlinia and Elmonfilon into Tower Ordilans and gave them midday meal, and then Sethlinia went home, and Roland and Alyson and Kenduar left the boy in the



main hall with Alyson's favorite cat, that at once took unto him much liking, and they went aside unto another chamber, where Kenduar put on Alyson's thumb the Ring of Wine and Music, and Alyson played upon the harp, and they learned that Sethlinia's speaking had been false and full of guile, but now only to some purpose general, with as yet no set plan afoot, but that Elmonfilon was wholly truthful and utterly without guile. So they took him at his word, while resolving to be most watchful of Sethlinia.

Thereafter, Lady Alyson and Elmon held together their practice of the use of sword, when Elmon was not at other duties as squire to Roland, and he showed great gift thereto, and oft he played upon the harp, whereat eke he showed himself well gifted, so much indeed that well might he surpass the skill of Alyson for music.

Now, at length, when Alyson had had a three-year's practice of blunt swords in contest and sharp sword at pells, whereat she learned cut deep without any harm to blade, she was found one day to be with child, and thereafter at the proper time she bore her lord his son and heir, and great was joy therefor through Ordilans and Clombendorn. And Kenduar took speech with High Ones anent the bodily heritage of that babe, and seemingly was much pleased therewith, though as yet

he gave no tidings, either to Alyson or to Roland. And the boy child, who at his christening was called Damoes, waxed well, passing in strength and growth the common run of infants. And Alyson and Roland and Kenduar and Elmon delighted much in his smiles and glances and gestures of infant sort while he was waxing. And on the night of that day whereon Damoes first took step and walked a little, with gait that faltered much but gave good hint of sureness to come, Alyson conceived again, and on that same night did Niolina Gisdan's wife conceive a second time, for she had had twins stillborn a year before. And when they were ware of that according, those two were gleeful much together, and Alyson bade her friend – for close they had become in making match in talk of their husbands' customs in their venery, after hearing each from other, privily, of what those husbands had gone through to lie with them at all, and both were lusty men and overmuch tender with their wives withal in gratefulness for what they deemed great good fortune, so that the wives had much whereof to giggle in privity – to share her own confinement and the service of her own midwife Mollecia, that had learned her art in not-too-far Cathay and had great skill. And when their time was come, upon the same day, Alyson bore twin daughters but Niolina a girl stillborn, whereof Midwife Mollecia, who had had much joy in

tending woman of the courage and free spirit which Gisdan had made his beloved known to have – by telling of the tale of Rengerd Bride-Despoiler – said no word of truth but changed the dead child for a living and made great wail with Alyson, when all had been done with calm that could be done, for the loss of one of her two daughters, to which sorrow Mollecia’s guilt at her own deceit lent strength of its own kind. And the deceit was aided by those twins’ being not each other’s likeness as some twins are. And Alyson treasured well her girl child that she kept, and Niolina had much delight in infant given without her knowing, though indeed she shared, as well might be, in grief of Alyson for baby dead.

Now, when Damoes had had his fifth birthday, on the next day thereafter, Kenduar said to Roland and Alyson, making sign to Elmon to make pause in music of the afternoon that Sunday: “Someone hath destroyed the mighty stone wherewith I sealed the opening of cave of Zormumnug Dragon; I have just felt undoing of great magic I had made, and that was the only one thereof that I had not myself undone or that had not been outgrown by time. We had best look to our defence, and ye, Lord Roland, had best make ready for such wielding of Cleavescale as we have talked upon since Zormumnug’s cave was sealed.” For there was more lore of Cleavescale than the tale hath told ere now, and it was not

wholly joyful tidings, that Kenduar had got in visits to the Wise and in reading of old tomes. And Roland nodded grimly.

And so, in keeping with the lore of Cleavescale, that the lore of the Gem of Irndolmes might not gainsay but that might well be aided thereby, Roland and Kenduar went out of Castle Clombendorn and straight unto the north, to a distance straitly measured by rede of Kenduar, and pitched a tent with their own hands to await Zormumnug, unattended but by each other. And they took turns sleeping and keeping watch, and he who watched kept ever Cleavescale in right hand, though he might sit while watching, and they had let bring two chairs therefor, for it needed not always that one of them must sleep. When they had watched and waited for three days, there came to them, upon a clear night of full moon, a sound as of mighty wings slowly aflap, and then they spied far off in the glimmer a great shape flying, that drew near fast. And when they saw that shape, Lord Roland pointed tip of Cleavescale thereat and then saluted three times with sword and pointed swordtip yet again and steadily at dragon. And that great shape shining in moonlight gan downward glide, and great Zormumnug came to ground some way to front of them.

“I feel a force put forth upon me which erst I had not known, that forestalleth

attack with flame on Tower Ordilans and Castle Clombendorn and keepeth me from lying about mine intent for coming here," the dragon said, reared up in front for all the world like sitting cat of Alyson, though with long tail stretched out behind and not acurl like cat's around forepaws, and his back was more acurve than sitting cat's. From such a sitting might he spring most suddenly and swift, and Kenduar was ware of him.

"Aye," quoth Roland. "My friend hath gained more lore of Cleavescale and of how the power may be used that was put into him at making. I am not minded that ye burn my castle molten about my ears with fiery breath, so you must even fight here now or within the hour flee and leave all men and their cattle free of you forever when you flee, to the place between the sky and Limbo until the world shall end and my body's offspring of that time must battle you at Armageddon. But it would like me better that ye fight me now, while yet fell Cleavescale gleameth whole."

"Know you yet all of Cleavescale's lore?" the dragon asked.

"Wot I well that Cleavescale needeth not to gather in your fiery breath to kill you now, if I be willing to bear in my own body the pain that ought be yours in being wounded, whether unto death or not. And I do bear that pain while pressing

on the fight, I may kill you now with Cleavescale. But if I slacken in the strife because of pain that ought be yours alone, ye will kill me now and gain full power of the Gem of Irndolmes, that now is largely mine because of your forsaking fight that time afore when we encountered. Oft have I prayed while waiting for ye that all the pain I have I might be able share with agony of Lord Jesu for my sins, and so endure like Him, and like Him while He suffered yet strive to will and do the good and not shrink back upon myself. So have I prayed and so till now gained courage to essay, whatever the deeds themselves may bring. Are you—”

Zormumnug struck swift with sudden swipe of his right forepaw, and then good Cleavescale leaped and cut, and paw hung well-nigh severed, and sore was pain in Roland’s wrist, that he almost dropped the sword, the more as stump of dragon-arm did scrape raw on shield that Roland stoutly set forth in stepping back, but he had minded him long time of Alyson and Damoes and little daughter Salmittena still safe from breath of dragon-flame, and he grimly swung grim Cleavescale swift at other paw, but that drew back in subtle quickness so fast it seemed that dragon, even with wings aspread for balance, might almost have faltered on his hind legs. And then Zormumnug, angered past all cunning care by that fell and sudden maiming – which, caused by Cleavescale, would stay done despite all

dragon-healing force flowing from within – flamed fiery breath at Roland ahead of Kenduar, which Roland caught on Cleavescale and gathered well therein. And then, sithen Roland was set strong to bear the agony thereof, that flame leaped forward out of sword and straight, in a lancing, pointed shape of brightest light, into the heart of Zormumnug the Mighty and slew him straightaway. But Roland felt great pang at heart, burning but not breaking, and despite it all he launched himself at dragon well before it fell, for he feared that foe had stolen back the flame from blade. For of that virtue of the sword even wily Kenduar had not known, but when it worked he marked its working for time to come, if again it should be needed, as it never was again in Clombendorn. But even as Roland leaped, Zormumnug reared up with mighty roar of chagrin and died and toppled over on his right side, and his great scales gleamed in the moonlight, wherein his eyes no longer gleamed though they were open. And then the dragon’s body vanished of a sudden, to Kenduar’s great surprise, and Roland, his hauberk all ajingle as he fell, did likewise topple over to his right and lay moveless on the sward. And Kenduar thought of Alyson fighting fell foes with husband dead, and he was heartsore. But Roland snored a mighty snore, and Kenduar did laugh. Then Kenduar picked up the horn that Roland had worn through all of his

adventures, and thereupon blew a long note and two short and another long, to let them in the castle know that dragon had been slain but help was needed to carry someone home. For the castle folk had had great trust in power of Gem of Irndolmes. And men came out with stretcher and drew near and brought Lord Roland back into his castle, and took him off the stretcher for to bear him up the winding steps of Tower Ordilans within the wall, and Alyson met him there with their children and Elmon, who by then was Roland’s very liegeman, having been knighted by him in the year just gone, and with Sir Reltur’s leech from not-too-far Cathay, that had great skill. And Kenduar told them quickly that Roland had no wound of body but had gone to sleep when dragon slain had vanished. He told them all that had happed in the encounter with the dragon, and Damoes said: “When will my father wake, Uncle Kenduar? For Susan Cook hath made a cake wherewith we are to make merry over his slaying of our foe that would have burned our castle molten.” For Susan Cook had soothed the children, somewhat despite Lady Alyson’s desire for courage in them, by making much of power of Gem of Irndolmes.

“It was a sudden-taking sleep, young master,” said Kenduar. “It might end as suddenly or last some time. I fear I may not try to say. But we must pray for him



to have good hap in sleep, for dragon-made it seemeth.” Meanwhile, Alyson and Elmon unarmed Roland and put him in bed, and Alyson kissed him and clipped him and then talked with Kenduar.

“Be there danger in the dragon-sleep?” asked Elmon, and Kenduar said that he knew not thereof. But the leech from Cathay said himseemed Roland’s sleep was a sleep of haleness. But when Damoes and Salmittena were eager in the morning for sharing victory cake with him, for Salmittena was beyond her scanty years in most matters of family dealing, wherein she shewed much shrewdness and took much joy, Lord Roland was still asleep, and so he was yet three days thence, and his children rued it much but Salmittena more, but Kenduar told them he would seek some rede of High Ones, sithen the Wise had told him all they knew anent Cleavescale and Zormumnug and the power of Gem of Irndolmes. And when Kenduar came out from his long vigil in Chapel of Saint Althemis, he looked deep in eyes of Alyson and of Elmon, and said unto the children, “Your father hath more to bear ere he waketh, and ye must pray that he be strong.”

“But he beat the dragon!” cried little Damoes.

“He slew the dragon, yes, and dragon never harmed him in his body,” said Kenduar. “But dragon-might endureth beyond might of man, most commonly,

unless man have help of High Ones or uncommon help from the Most High. Men know not the end of evil until death, but dragon-evil may live beyond the death of very dragon. The High have told me, through my own guardian, that a dragon slain by Cleavescale's greatest might can cast, within his act of dying, by using all that in him is, a sleep upon his slayer that will last for years, whether three or seven or fourteen or twenty-one, in such measure as slayer lacked good cheer in bearing dragon-pain of Cleavescale's causing. A man who sleepeth that sleep will dream one time in every three weeks that the seven folk whom he most loveth are torn asunder by a dragon and swallowed thereby while life yet lingereth. And if his soul make real rebellion against God for letting that to hap, he will age three years for each year that he sleepeth. But if even in the doubtful realm of dream where guilt be never earned he beareth will of God with sorrow but in meekness, he will grow seven years the younger, at very least, while he doth sleep.

“Now, and Lord Roland beareth well the testing of the dream-realm, he may wake well afore any of the wonted terms of dragon-sleep have come to pass, in a time of his distress which he endureth well. But whatever time he waketh, those that watch him will have warning thereof, by his having oped his eyes and stared unseeing, as sleepers sometimes do. For he shall open eyes and stare unseeing

thrice within short while, and when he hath closed his eyes that third time, ye shall know that he will wake three hours times seven thence. Therefore it behooveth that friends keep trusty watch upon our lord asleep, that Damoes may know when he must be at hand for his father's waking.

“Now, Damoes,” said Kenduar, bending down unto the child so that he knelt upon one knee, “thy father will sleep long, but when he waketh, it will not seem to him to have been long at all, and thou wilt be an older boy, or mayhap a young man, but thou must be the first he looketh on when he doth wake, and he must then know thee for thyself, or great harm must come to all of us soon after, so thou must be good son unto thy mother and to him through all the time that he doth sleep, that he may see most clearly and at once, in thy dark eyes, thine own true sonship unto him. And thereto thou must say for him good prayer unto our Virgin Mother, when that thou seest he be troubled in his sleep. For he will seem most troubled from time to time, as he dreameth of frightful death of those he loveth most. And if he seeth quick your sonship when he waketh, that may serve to spare the two of ye great evil when doom cometh nigh to Clombendorn.” And Damoes was greatly sober at those words of Kenduar.

“But what of me?” asked Salmittena.

“The High gave me no rede of how ye may help, my damsel,” said Kenduar.

“But methinks it will be well if you and Elmon pray in chapel all those times your father's sleep be troubled. He will be much glad of that when he hath waked. Meseemeth the prayers of Damoes are not so pure ye may not aid them.” And he smiled at the two children.

Now Damoes took Kenduar's words to heart most deeply and always was much distressed when he saw his father's sleep was troubled, but that distress did make him no less steadfast in his praying, and it was seen that as the boy prayed on, the sleeping lord's face turned sternly calm quickly after trouble, and with that calmness came lessening of marks of age upon Lord Roland, and Damoes then prayed more oft than strait need was, and made great friendship unto Mary, Mother of the Lord. And at times away from father's bedside he was a merry child and bright, both in mood and in might to learn, and at the age of five years and a half he understood right well his father's battles in the realm of dream, for he was keen to judge of what men felt, from watching of their faces. And one evening in the hall he kicked a shin of a visiting knight that glanced at Alyson in certain wise, and that knight laughed shamefacedly, for he saw into heart of Damoes as the boy saw into his, and the praise he gave the boy was sweet to ear

of Alyson, who smiled upon that knight full kindly, though with distance due her faithfulness to Roland. And Elmon then took Damoes aside and said to him: “Well might ye defend your mother’s grace, young lord, but a kick is not well given by a man who would be knighted, for there is shame in giving and in getting of a kick. And it is not meet that youngling who may not be attacked should use that safety to assail an elder, even in good cause like mother’s honour. Looks are not amendable by blows and not always by words unless from woman; and in words, if it had come to that, your mother had been his match unless I miss my reckoning. And if blow had been warranted at all, then am I good liegeman to my lord and lady and would not have been tardy to offer challenge. Ye have therefore affronted me somewhat, young lord.” And Damoes was abashed and hung his head.

“Nay, my lad,” quoth Elmon, “‘twas not done wholly ill, for ‘twas not ill in will. But ‘twere well it were not done again.” And he smiled, and Damoes smiled back, well content to be so lessoned. And oft was he lessoned thus in courtesy and in the demands of courage to be made upon him when he grew, by Elmon Roland’s liegeman.

Now, at the end of a year of Roland’s sleeping soundly and of his son’s

attending him and faithful prayer for him, Roland seemed much younger than he had been before the fight with dragon. And Damoes was so faithful unto prayer for his father's weal that he would not even let the company of Loeloma, daughter of Gisdan Pedlar (so all believed save Mollecia Midwife) tempt him from Roland's side when prayer was needful, though loth he was to leave her side when that fair child did visit Castle Clombendorn, for their minds and moods accorded well, the more as the girl delighted in looking to him as elder and more wise and he was not loth to be thus flattered. And one day when they were at play in inner bailey under care of Susan Cook during a half-hour free from kitchen work, there came to them at tower foot a lady tall who smiled at them as with much pleasure and then said: "My boy, ye have a look about ye of Roland Ordilans, though not black-bearded yet for many years, I hope. Are ye his son? I have heard he hath such who favoureth him in black hair and dark-blue eye, and I have much to say unto the lady Alyson and Master Kenduar."

"What name may I give Lady Alyson for ye, my lady?" asked Susan Cook.

"I hight Lady Gathina of Ponolinos," quoth that tall woman of noble mien, and Elmon looked sharp at her and Susan Cook turned pale.

When Elmon brought the tall lady unto Alyson and Kenduar, they knew her for

herself at once, albeit with some distance of manner not unseemly till they might hear what tale she told whom they had deemed long dead and of whom naught had been heard in Clombendorn since word that Dragon Zormumnug gave unsought, of her having died in seeking of revenge. Alyson and Kenduar were curious therefor.

“My lady Alyson, my lord Kenduar,” said Gathina after hearing them yeasay what had been noised abroad of Roland’s plight, whereat she looked most grave, “much hath befallen in my life since the days I greatly wronged ye and gained forgiveness undeserved of your sweet mercy. I have married and borne child and lost husband unto murder by a friend we trusted much, and I have been enslaved by dragon and his servant who played that part of friend of my beloved husband. I have been purged of all desire of revenge for Osgern Dragonheart and have come to see his fellness clearly, for whom I now do keep not even small a liking.”

“Hath ring of truth, this last, at least,” thought Kenduar, and Alyson saw his thought and did agree therewith, and slightly softened in her heart toward the other lady. But Gathina went on therefrom.

“I wed a young lord on way to fulfilling my penance set by priest,” said queen-like Gathina. And she told her tale, mixing therein much that hath been truly told

aforetime. She said that she had made her full penance at Shrine of Saint Catherine and that her husband Lothorn had later made pilgrimage to Saint George’s Shrine at Ormolnois in penance taken upon himself for his having delayed hers, to which penance he was urged by Mardnan, who then had slain him as he prayed while Gathina slept upon the ground nearby for strength to help her lord keep vigil later. And Mardnan, secretly a sorcerous disciple of Zormumnug, had used the blood of that unholy sacrifice at shrine of saint to free his master. Then Zormumnug had felt in her a touch – he called it “taint,” she said – of the Gem of Irndolmes and tortured her frightfully until she told all she knew anent that Gem and those who kept it. (And here, with tears, she begged forgiveness for that forced betrayal and her weakness shown therein. And that pardon Alyson and Kenduar did give her, for Gathina now was such a liar, through such means as shall be told hereafter, as might deceive even the elect.) And when, she said, the dragon left for Clombendorn, with promise to besmirch her name among those who had forgiven her, Mardnan Sorcerer had taken her to be plaything of his lust and had got on her a daughter she loved much despite the fathering thereof, through holding her by magic moveless in his bed and castle far from Ponolinos. Mardnan much rued the putting back in prison-cave of Zormumnug Dragon by



Kendar and Lord Roland, and waited until Gathina's daughter and his own was seven years old and then sacrificed that child on her seventh birthday while Gathina stayed bound in bed by magic, mad with grief and rage, to set Zormumnug free again. And Zormumnug had flown out with breath aflame, she said Mardnan had told her gloating when he returned to castle with severed head of daughter. But when word came back that the dragon had been slain in Clombendorn, Mardnan had despaired of all success in magic and had stabbed himself in heart to go to Hell before more evil deeds could make it even hotter for him, and yet his magic bound Gathina in his bed for three weeks times seven thereafter, until an unwilling servant of Mardnan's magic, among his castle-folk, joyous in his freedom, found a spell to set her free. She had returned to Ponolinos and found her husband's family and her own children slain and their castle destroyed by Zormumnug on his way to Castle Clombendorn, but she had found among the ruins thereof much treasure that had been owned by her late husband Lothorn, and now, though having wealth indeed, she was alone as she had been when sent on pilgrimage to Shrine of Catherine. And now she was come back to Clombendorn with dowry for seeking of a husband among her own people, if any would have her after hearing how her way had fared. And thereat she wept a little

but with noble mien.

“My lady Gathina, ye must be tired after your long journey,” said Alyson as Gathina’s tale, and meal taken therewith, had ending. “Let me take you where ye may rest.” For Elmon himself had seen to guesting of the men-at-arms who had arrived with Gathina for guarding of her and her chest of jewels and coin.

“What think ye of all that?” asked Alyson when she came back to Kenduar.

“Either whole truth unblemished or lies most cunning told,” quoth he.

“Shall I take up the harp? Or should Elmon be asked to play for us this time?”

“The Ring of Wine and Music is not really meant for such a case, I have learned to my somewhat ruing. It was made chiefly for yeasaying or countering in cases needing judgement by a court, or at least in desperate case where need be high and grave. So told me the High when we last made use thereof. They had not thought to mention that before, having deemed it ought be plain to men that such device is meant for rare appeal unto their powers. They were not a little annoyed with me for my using it to test Sethlinia and Elmon, though they were bound give aid thereto when Ring was used. It was not meant replace shrewdness of mankind anent matters of our own nature, a High One told me haughtily.”

“And of course ye were too chastened in your pride to have told me that

aforetime. Poor Kenduar, lessoned like little Shinkicker when Elmon hath seen fault. Though I take it your masters were none so gracious as our Elmon. Ha, ha, ha!”

“Oh, be quiet.”

Now, when Gathina had been three days again at Tower Ordilans and was well versed in tale of plight of Roland Lord of Clombendorn, she asked that she might sit and watch with others at Roland’s bedside. For, she said, her own heavy suffering from dragon-might and dragon lack of mercy, that she had endured so long, had quickened in her much pity for other wight bent thereunder, so she was minded lend her own endurance that remained, unto Roland’s. But she said she knew it would not be seemly that she sit thus and watch without companion waking fully grown who was true friend to Roland. And Kenduar did rede, with nod aside to Alyson, that that asking should be allowed. “For,” he said privily later to Alyson, “such presence of one so steeped in dragon-might, whether borne and outworn as she saith or overmastering her so deep I may not see it, can hardly help but bear on Roland’s haleness, so as to test her word and will anent our welfare. Such bearing as it hath must appear full early and be plain to me ere it can much harm if it indeed be harmful, so that I may counter it at once.”

Therefore Alyson was not loth to have Gathina's company in presence of her lord, or to allow her there with Kenduar or Elmon. And Salmittena sat there oft with those two ladies, though somewhat glum betimes that her father's waking would not need her.

Now, that rede of Kenduar seemed quick to bear good fruit, for when Alyson and Gathina had sat for seven days their turn of three hours daily at bedside of Alyson's beloved sleeper, Roland had seemed thrive better and grow younger far more fast, with no sign of harm toward. And on that seventh day, at the third hour of the clock past noon, Roland spoke name of Alyson, in voice firm and clear and tender, though it was clear that by no means was he wakeful, in a tone of love most plain. And Alyson deemed it good omen, and so did Kenduar when told, and she was yet more kindly toward Gathina. For hitherto had Roland not spoken in this sleep, that anyone had heard, though Alyson oft had laughed outright, so as to wake him, at things that he had said in sleep aforetime. And so they were eager that Gathina spend more time with Roland, though not so much as would tax her heavily, in the company of others than Alyson. And Roland seemed thrive passing well in her presence, and at the third hour of every afternoon, he spake name of Alyson in voice of love most strong, while yet he stayed in deepest sleep.

Now, Gathina abode long time at Castle Clombendorn, where Lady Sethlinia was wont to visit Elmon oft with her new husband, that was Sir Reltur. He had loved her afore her first marriage and deemed himself unworthy of her – though not more so, himthought, than he to whom indeed she had been wed – so that long after death of Dorlimus was Sir Reltur minded to speak of own desire long cherished in buried secret, and she had been pleased to welcome suit of one in whom his honour seemed so great that it might redeem her own treachery. For a sermon preached by travelling priest had made her much afraid of Hell, for time that was long enough therefor. And in cleaving to that knight most loyal to his lord of all the knights of Clombendorn, in her marriage now of three years' standing, she had forsaken all her thoughts of revenge on Roland or Alyson or Kenduar, and that change of heart had subtle Kenduar soon seen, and he had told Alyson that Sethlinia might be trusted now, at least till death of Reltur. But after some words with her alone, while walking in the pleasance Roland had let make for ladies' use at Kenduar's devising, Gathina deemed she felt at least some small kindred evil wake again in Sethlinia's heart, that was none so true to God Himself but only followed strongest bent of man she loved with mostly flesh and feeling. And so that evil wakened was, by evil heart of deep Gathina, for down in soul of

Lady Sethlinia was yet slight sighing for to be even with those three to whose harming she had spurred Dorlimus so fruitlessly save for his own death and dishonour. And that slight breath was Gathina most skilful for to stir, with devious wording suited to questing ear, for fostering of dark alliance. And after a little time of sounding out, one of another, those two were deeming they were well of one mind. When each had tested enough intent of other, Gathina said, “My vengeance is already well awork. Through his daughter Salmittena, who deemeth her father’s destiny doth slight herself in favour of his son, I have gained entry to Roland’s dreaming mind. I am planting well therein the strong belief that I work through magic to wreak exchange of likenesses for me and Alyson, that he may lie with me in guise of her. When he waketh, thinking me her, he will want much to lie with me and cast her off and punish her for making black magic. And if he lie with me in that belief, he will get on me a son will grow apace and kill all that wretched family over Gem of Irndolmes, within seven years of Roland’s waking. But if this plan of mine be thwarted, I may yet claim trial by combat if my right as wife be challenged by his true lady, and I will fight her to the death. And it is most like that I shall win, by means I need not speak of now. For I have been well trained in art of sword, by a master most skilled both in doing and in

teaching, and there are also reasons that belong to black magic ye need not know.

“But even this device may fail and I may die, though seemeth it most unlikely, at hand of Alyson the Bitch. If that so hap, I have yet another scheme, though one that needeth partner for me, even less like to fail, though I be not here to further it myself. But if I speak of it to any other woman, that one, if she lend her will to listening thereto, will find herself wholly bent to my design and driven to achieve it for my sake, leaving aside, if that be needed, all purpose of her own to be swept up in mine – but hers will be promised not to fail in thus serving as handmaid unto mine own. But her purpose will be furthered by her seeking my will truly and not her own. Dare I ask of ye such boon?”

“Right readily would I grant it, if so be I rightly understand I will get my way by seeking yours?”

“Even so.”

“Done,” quoth Sethlinia.

Then Gathina told Sethlinia the true tale hidden in her heart when she had told Kenduar and Alyson of what befell between her leaving Clombendorn on pilgrimage and her return. The jaws, she said, of great Zormumnug had closed upon her shoulders and her ankles, where his teeth had pricked her sharply to the

drawing forth of blood, and he had wagged fiercely his head to her great pain, and then with sidewise bend of head he had put her on her feet and opened maw to let her stand, and had drawn back maw from around her and had laughed a dragon-laugh. And he had told her how revenge might be achieved even though he himself might fall and die in what he meant to do. And in full accord with that fell rede, she had yielded her body to his lying with her, wherein she had much eldritch pleasure after pain and whereof she gained great measure of dragon-skill for working on men's minds. And when Zormumnug had returned with knight and wizard on his neck for his imprisoning again, she had known what would set him free another time, and therefor had she sacrificed the heir of Lothorn at the shrine-cave, after working on guileless readiness to trust her of Lothorn's family. To them had she told, after dragon first was freed, a likely tale of their son's death, and of the dragon's slaying escort at the shrine (so much was true) when they woke aghast at murder and fought for her defence, which alone let her escape from worm that sought defile chaste wifehood for ends she could not guess. And Zormumnug had indeed destroyed the castle at Ponolinos and the folk thereof, to keep Gathina from being found out by them or by Kenduar in seeking them (as he had sought since her arrival), but there had been no great treasure thereat, nor was



there need thereof, for Zormumnug had great hoard hidden whereof he had told her.

Sethlinia laughed in evil glee at this hearing, and Gathina deemed her snare was closed. Gathina told her partner then of certain rules of mixing for unmaking, that Zormumnug had known in Cathay afore he was cast out for his first sin – since all dragons that menace other lands have been cast out for sinful fall from kindly ruling over Cathay – and she told Sethlinia to cause Sir Reltur use those rules in warfare against Lord Roland if Gathina’s first scheme failed. And from that pleasance, Sethlinia went forth to work on noble heart of loyal Reltur, whose only fault that leant at all to graveness might be his knowing himself nobly loyal and deserving of like return.

Gathina went back to working her will on dreaming Roland through his daughter Salmittena, and she wrought so well to such ill purpose that when, after seven years of sleeping soundly (sithen Gathina’s working thereon had lengthened the time thereof), with signs of waking seen aforetime, Lord Roland Ordilans of Clombendorn awoke and saw his son and knew him for his Damoes, he ran outside his room and strait past Lady Alyson his wife and sought Gathina, to whom he cried, “My lady wife!” And to Gathina he poured out tale of how

Gathina had sought cozen him in sleep unto his waking most deceived, and how he was most unfooled thereby and would cast out now the woman that seemed Alyson unto his bane and to his wife's. Gathina rejoiced inwardly but outwardly was gravely loving and asked him take her to his bed for casting off the spell of witch that played his wife, and for renewal of their joy together that he must oft have dreamed that he had lost forever until Heaven, before they both should turn to duty stern of dealing with the likeness-stealer. But Lord Roland was much too wroth with her he deemed Gathina for him to lie with even Alyson while Gathina's being alive in Ordilans kept stench upon his donjon. He was so wroth he fiercely urged Gathina, that himseemed was sword-skilled Alyson enchanted, to challenge her that he deemed witch to trial by combat and slay her speedily forthwith, and he was thereto so eager that he would not be gainsaid or brook delay even for resort to Ring of Wine and Music, as suggested Kenduar not loth brave High Ones in this cause. And so he armed Gathina and Kenduar armed Alyson, whereat Roland was somewhat wroth, though he had not lost all trust of Kenduar. But Kenduar had pierced but late the scheme of fell Gathina, and had got hasty rede from High, through his angel guardian when all in chapel prayed (Gathina to the Evil One) for victory in the trial, and he gave that rede and grave

tidings unto Alyson. “My dear one,” said Kenduar in whisper as all went to outer bailey, “when ye fight Gathina ye must not wound her breasts or womb or door thereto, or ye will therewith seal for her the hold she hath on mind of Roland, that he may thereafter never know ye for his lawful wife or who verily ye be, not though ye kill the witch in fight he hath himself ordained to test ye both. But rather he will ever grieve what he will deem his loss of you in likeness of Gathina, through what he may even come to call the malice of Lord Jesu in letting unskilled witch to overcome swift swordswoman. And Gathina may achieve the loss of his soul by his forsaking therefor the goodness of Our Lord, wherein he hath trusted ever heretofore. Or he will belike be wood for ever until death if after wounding breast or womb of foe ye are allowed to live on as what himseemeth must be witch in guise of his beloved.”

Now, when the combat was begun, with sword and shield as Alyson did choose upon her being challenged, Salmittena fell aswoon and deemed she saw her mother strike at womb and breast of foe, and what was in her swooning passed unto Alyson’s waking wareness and mixed therein with the very deeds of combat and clouded much her thinking, so that she oft was over slow to strike or ward and was wounded oft but not gravely so. For Gathina, knowing by black magic

the bounds of fighting of true woman, knew not that Alyson eke was ware of them, and toyed with Alyson in their fighting. And thus that fight went on for half an hour, until Alyson, much bebled and tiring sore, made stroke more lucky than well aimed, that she had good skill to make right well were not her mind making way mightily against muddle. That stroke did ope long level cut twixt helmet-rim, whereby was point skim-guided, and eyebrows, and blinded Gathina with own blood. Then Alyson, with will held sternly steadfast, made sure stroke that cut off Gathina's head. That was only the second of the strokes which drew blood among all that Alyson had meant for limbs or face throughout their combat. And Salmittena, who had dreamed her mother foully slaughtered by a witch for fighting most unfair, awoke to find that mother bending over her with heedfulness full sore and kind, who then arose to strong embracing of Lord Roland. And Salmittena knew then how much it was that she had lent the enmity of dead Gathina for her parents while the witch had lived, and thereat she wept with great contrition. And thereafter she and Damoes were fast friends, and she was fast friend of Loeloma, the foster-daughter of Gisdan Pedlar that all now deemed his own get, sithen Mollecia Midwife had died of sickness while Roland slept, without undoing her deceit as she had sometimes meant – especially since Gisdan

and Niolina now had two pairs of twins on live and thriving. Roland was glad of his children’s having grown so well so far with that upbringing wherewith he himself had had so little doing, and he delighted in hearing tales of their childhood he had missed. And he had joy in being now to help with matters that troubled Damoes, who asked him soon after Gathina had been slain, “If my mother might have died in facing of her foe, as Elmon warned might hap, where lieth surety of justice in trial by combat?”

Quoth Roland then: “There lieth in trial by combat no surety of justice for either side, but only surety of death for one or both, who must be ready to take death in fight for justice, which may well be best weak man can do. In trial by combat, a man slayeth not to impose justice, but rather faceth his being slain rather than bear injustice he deemeth worse than death. That is most right to do, for injustice is a thing of soul and death be only of the body unless it lead to Hell. But every slaying of a man is dire deed, and no slayer thereof may keep apart from his own self that direness. Such avoiding all too oft is done, but yet is not allowed. It is a foulness in the nostrils of Our Lord. Even He did choose to earn by being slain, though already He did have it by simple justice in Himself, the right as God to slay us other men or even His right to allow our deaths at hands of

other men or beasts or even unliving matter. What a man maketh, belongeth to himself. A man that maketh death of man hath no right to deal with that as though it did belong only to those he slayeth. It is his own by right of making. If it cometh to him not yet, that is but his good hap of a fair fight. It is as much a gift of God to him as it is just reward of seeking justice when indeed all men so deem it.

“A question of the truly good is worth a death when no dispute but of the body will serve its answering,” said Roland to his son. “He who so disputeth must not much care whether the dying to be done be his or foe’s, but must rather seek to bear bravely the pain of equal strife in fair fight. He that hath the right must take comfort in that only, even as he that fighteth for cause he knoweth wrong taketh comfort in that he seeketh his own will. That is why a man who would be knight must endure while he be squire long striving to gain prowess, that he may recall the pain of strife even in a combat found easy for the nonce. And why to some men is given ready skill without such striving to endure is a mystery of God. But any youth of whom I have the training will endure that strife from practice long and hard, whether or not he have skill from inborn gift. Hardihood is more than prowess in a knightly man.” And Roland saw to it that in the squireship of

Damoer to Elmon that lesson was well learned and oft taught.

Now, when Damoer had been a squire some three years and six months and was midway between his fourteenth birthday and his twenty-first, Kenduar gave rede unto House Ordilans anent his bodily heritage whereof Kenduar was told by High Ones when Damoer was born. Kenduar called together therefor Roland and Alyson and Damoer and Salmittena and Sir Elmon, and in their hearing said: “You, Damoer, my foster-nephew as it were, were begotten and conceived in full bodily heritage and likeness, within and without, of Arthur King of England, under the overseeing of Arthur’s own angel guardian, now yours. That High One was given charge by the Most High of bringing about the return foretold of Arthur, king that was and is to come. For the Most High hath ordained that heir to Arthur’s gifts of mind and body shall be begotten and conceived – in age after age, mayhap – until such heir achieve the full return of Arthur’s kingship. Ye are offspring in direct line of Arthur, by way of a ravishing by Mordred in his youth of a lady chaste, that Arthur did avenge at Camlann all unwitting, for that lady had a lord most cruel, who would have slain the child she bore and he had deemed it not his own. And that lord was of them that fought on Mordred’s side at Camlann. And that child thus spared was forefather of Lord Roland.” And Roland

turned pale at thought of wrong to his foremother.

“You, Damoes,” said Kenduar, “are the first such heir I wot of, but your essay at the return may well be thwarted, so that Salmittena may be foremother of another such in age to come. Ye were begotten, born, and reared in this land of Clombendorn for that it was established – some say, among the Wise, by Merlin himself when he first took service with Uther Pendragon – to that end. It is another England far off from first, for fostering of Arthur’s heirs in such safety as may be got in world unsure. That is why we all speak English and follow mostly English ways so nearly under shadow of Cathay, in land whereto the paths of Roland and his lady were guided by the High.

“Damoës, ye may choose, mayhap, to establish high English rule of Arthur here, when that ye come of age, but it were best by far that at that time ye do return to England, by swift magic means I foresee I shall be able make, and reclaim the very English throne from him who is but regent for the nonce. He ought readily be made to see your right. But ye must be tested here for kingship’s fitness ere ye thus return, by a dire threat, whereof I see not clearly yet, to the hereafter of this land and the folk thereof. And anent that, I may not as now say more.



“Meanwhile, Damoes, ye must be chaste and fair and just so far as plight of fallen man alloweth, and ye must avoid above all else that first mortal sin and the mortal error made by Arthur, sin of lying with another’s wife and error of lying with sister all unwitting, or great harm will be done to England and ablings eke to Clombendorn, from the making again of that sin and error. And for to forestall such sin and error, I will give to you and Salmittena soon some passwords ye may speak when minded to lie with your own spouse. Thus, when password spoken be and answer given truly or unsaid, ye may know whether one with whom ye be about to lie be verily your sister made seem other by enchantment, as might well befall in time to come. For Alcortha left a heritage as well as Arthur, and her heirs in ages far to come will oft speak ill of Arthur’s own obedience and purvey false histories to render seemly to the ears of men – and, foremostly, of many women that ought otherwise bear sons dutiful – the ancient heathen’s enmity of Arthur’s noble vassalage to Christ the Most High Lord. There are even rumours among the Wise that Morgause yet liveth and will live long time. And cunning are the foes of Arthur’s line, both on our Earth and among the fallen high ones.

“It is well, meseemeth, Damoes,” (for Kenduar spoke to no other yet, nor did he look toward the rest, so much was he intent and grave, though others gravely

listened) “that ye have fixed your heart on Loeloma – ay, well may ye blush, my lad, for shame of your undeserving. She, methinks, be fierce enough to fast curtail any lust that ye might get for wandering to other beds, if indeed ye come to wed. And if indeed ye two do soon become betrothed, as I would rede if asked, I will give ye also other passwords to make it sure ye both know well ye are about to lie with your own spouse.”

When Kenduar had ended thus that speech, all the other five in company each took long breath and all began to speak at once, so that there was much talk, when speech was sorted out, that pertaineth not to the tale as it is told, save that some remarked to others that they knew now whence came that seeming inborn skill of Damoes with arms, on which Lord Roland oft seemed frown as if it lent not to fight full fair.

For that cause, or so it seemed, Roland oft pressed his son in combat practice well beyond the bearing of any common squire, but Damoes seemed delight in that with soul if not with body. And that somewhat cheered Lord Roland, who taught him therefore many cunning patterns of stroke and ward that Roland had devised while dreaming, in long sleep, of fighting fell foes for saving of his family. And Damoes took much pleasure in learning from his sire, more than

from Sir Elmon who was his teacher by right of squire-duty of young Damoes.

And his learning well gave Elmon also fierce delight.

Now, while Damoes gained skills and virtues pertaining unto knighthood and grew in traits of rulership fair and just and gracious, Sethlinia was working upon Reltur's pride in his great loyalty, for to sway him into deeming that that high virtue had not return of gratefulness that it deserved. And well she worked upon that fault of self-regarding, to make Sir Reltur deem that Roland took his fealty for granted and almost scorned him for devotion seeming dog-like and inborn, in one who had himself such gift for rulership and first place in Clombendorn. And he brooded much on fancied slights that Sethlinia made greater in his mind, both from Roland and from knights whose loyalty he deemed made more of by their lord. And Roland gan see his brooding silences and mock him mildly therefor, and that made matters much the worse.

So ill had these become, before the twenty-first birthday of Damoes was well toward, that Reltur and Sethlinia had between them, or so Sir Reltur deemed, hatched a deadly scheme to spoil the honouring thereof. For in the years that led thereto, Sethlinia had feigned unto Reltur that she had found by chance, among belongings of their leech that had come from Cathay, the mixing-rules for making

stormdust used in Cathay to make small thunder for banishing of demons, that might be used for great destruction. But those rules and the manner of that use had in truth been told to her by Gathina that now was dead. And by the rede Sethlinia did give, Sir Reltur, using treasure of Gathina that others thought had vanished when she died, paid workmen in Dormondinal, whereto was King Cordimas far from loth, to make what he told all who needed any telling would be deep and narrow vessels for strong drink. These vessels would be of steel of a new devising, with small holes near lower ends for drawing off the liquor he meant make, that he promised would be strong and keen of taste. For to make his deception surer, he hired making of wineskin linings for those vessels, and eke the making of metal stoppers for them, though for the stoppers and the linings he had no use whatever but to further his deceit. And Reltur hired other workmen from a further region of the land of Cordimas, for to make large balls of metal, that he said he meant for gifts unto Lord Roland for use in bombards of siege if ever Roland needed them. And King Cordimas was nothing loth to have his folk earn wealth thereby, for he knew naught of use in warfare of stormdust of Cathay. And in the meantime, Reltur was having men of his own manor make stormdust for him, while they were sworn to secrecy by great oaths, from dung and other nasty

matter.

Now, Sir Reltur's leech from not-too-far Cathay, whose name outlandish all the English folk of Clombendorn had shortened unto Lee, did one day catch a smell of burnt stormdust from Sir Reltur and his lady, and he knew thereof the uses allowed and those forbidden in Cathay, and he was much uneasy and bethought him oft of whether he ought do aught therefor. And one day a leech from realm of Cordimas did visit him and made mention of what that leech did deem were great storage vessels for strong drink, whereof he told the manner of their being made. Then Lee the Leech was much dismayed by smell of treachery indeed, to honest warfare if not eke to Lord Roland, and he sought ear of Kenduar and told him all he knew thereof. And Kenduar was grimly pleased and he did rede Lord Roland hire Lee the Leech away from Reltur's service, that he need not further serve a dastard and a traitor. And Kenduar made plans and skilled devisings of his own, which he shared with Sir Elmonfilon, knight of much prowess and his pupil in music who surpassed him therein.

While Kenduar devised, House Ordilans made ready for the knighting of their Damoes and made his betrothal to Loeloma, daughter of Gisdan Pedlar, who now had many daughters, whereof some were deemed by most men to be more fair

than she but none was so much to the mind of Damoes.

When the twenty-first birthday of Damoes was three days thence, and Kenduar had word from lesser High One whom he had asked therefor, that Sir Reltur was making ready for to seize the lordship of Clombendorn with a great host of hireling men-at-arms paid with what was left of treasure from Gathina, that she had from great Zormumnug for staining of souls that took it, Kenduar deemed that Ordilans was well ready therefor. And he did rede that Roland call full council of all the folk of Ordilans to be held at Castle Clombendorn and bid them come to stronghold with all their livestock and belongings. That was done that day, and Reltur soon heard of it and was well pleased, and said to Sethlinia, “We shall have all the fish in one small bucket,” and he grimly smiled.

All the folk of Ordilans were much wroth when Roland told them what was toward, and many of the men-at-arms gave rede that Ordilans now make attack on Reltur’s manor in surprise before his host arrived, and put him upon trial for treason, with resort to Ring of Wine and Music if need be.

“That were not well done as now,” said Roland. “Wizard Kenduar hath had word by means of his that spy went out to Reltur late this morn, for to warn him ye were summoned here for a matter of some weight. His host hath been made

ware he standeth in some danger now, and so they would be ready if we marched. And we must not raise the muster of all Clombendorn as now, for word hath gone out to all our other knights, from both sides, that this is privy quarrel they share not, so that Clombendorn not be sundered and brought to ruin by inner war made general. For Clombendorn is sacred to the kingship of far-off England, whereof ye and your forebears kept good memory, and so must stay if it can so be kept. But ye may know, and must, that Master Kenduar hath means destroy the fell weapons newfangle whereon Sir Reltur so much counteth. And in destroying them he will astonie, and may even slay, much of Reltur's host. These means he hath devised with aid of our good knight Sir Elmon, his pupil in magic. But these means may fail and our castle be destroyed. In that case, Sir Reltur meaneth he will leave neither wall standing nor man nor child alive, nor even any woman after she hath served his hirelings' lusts. But if our wizard fail defeat that foe, he yet hath means avoid the weird that Reltur hath devised for us. For Kenduar hath magic now at hand, from great mercy of the High Ones, that may send ye all, together or alone, in parties large or small, to other lands. Ye may go upon this magic to Cathay, where Lee the Leech returneth by this means, or to far-off England where by God's will our Damoes will soon be king if he be spared upon

his birthday. Or else the High may take ye to a land called Narbicana upon the world Tellares, whereof Kenduar doth wot, that ye may travel therefrom to the England of that world, which is called Sassenter and is much like Clombendorn, but larger and more bountiful and more oft at peace. For Kenduar may open in our castle's walls three magic portals that outside the walls may not be seen but yet will ope on like-made portals unto those lands. And such of ye as go unto Tellares are promised good and prosperous living by the High Ones, whose rule upon Tellares is better rooted than in our world, though most openly so in Narbicana, where ye may stay but three months before ye leave for Sassenter.

“We parents and sister of our Damoes must fare to England, as must family of Gisdan Pedlar, for to wait for Damoes and he be spared in testing he must take upon his birthday, that Kenduar hath foretold to us. We would welcome any of ye that would come with us to England, though our weird there be chancier, and we would be well pleased if ye should go unto Tellares. But families must not be broken between the two, though they may be broken between England and Cathay. And ye now must reckon whereto ye would be sent by magic. That reckoning must be done within next seven hours and told to Kenduar forthwith. But no one now may leave this castle until the time that ye will go to other lands



or till we have such victory over Reltur as will warn men for many ages never to wage war with weapons such as Reltur deemeth will lay waste our castle and get him lordship over Clombendorn.” And there was thereafter much talk and many questions, that pertain not to the tale as it is told.

While folk of Ordilans made ready for war or for their leaving, as might befall, Kenduar gave rede to Damoes anent the testing that had been foretold. He said: “When all have gone from Castle Clombendorn upon your birthday, if my plan for its defence miscarry, ye must wait on steps of Tower Fair for the Griffin of the West to come to ye. He will bend before ye and ye must quickly get upon his back and hold the two black feathers, one on each side, that are among the golden of his neck where they come down upon the shoulders, which will put your hands nigh to your knees. That may make for a rude riding, but the riding will be short and speedy withal. The Griffin then will bear ye to mayhap three places in Clombendorn that are mostly hidden places, or mayhap only two, or even, which God forbend, but one. For in either of the first two places it might befall that ye be slain.

“When that ye ride upon the Griffin of the West, nor you nor Griffin may be seen by mortal wight, nor may ye be seen when ye get down from Griffin’s back

to see what will be shown ye for your testing. At the first place whereto ye shall have ridden, ye will see a deed about to hap that ye may forestall by giving rede, and ye must reckon whether it be meet for king-to-be to risk his kingship and his death by giving of such rede. And if ye wrongly choose, ye may be seen ever thereafter as ye wend or ride, and ye may then be slain in Clombendorn. But if ye choose aright, or if ye wrongly choose and yet scape slaying, the Griffin will bear ye to another place where ye must reckon whether certain deed be worthy of a king, or ablings whether kingship doth demand it of him. And if ye choose aright to do that deed, such prowess will come upon ye from the High as will make ye well able for to do it. But if ye wrongly choose to do that deed, ye will almost of a surety be slain. And if ye make but one right choice in two, and if ye be not slain, Griffin of West will take ye where ye will be given such a vision as will uphold ye well in any trial that may arise from kingship in far-off England. But if ye fail in the testing and yet live, ye must be wandering knight in this part of world for seven years, whereafter will be sent to ye another testing. But if my plan for our defence not fail, then will be your testing later in the day, in a manner otherwise in small ways but much the same in very nature. And further rede anent this testing I may not give ye, save that it were best, my heart me telleth strangely, that

you and Loeloma not be wed till ye have both gone unto England and your kingdom there hath been attained. For such delay will give ye fodder for feeling-fire to light your way to kingship, and ye need all aid that ye may get therefor.”

Damoer gave that word to Loeloma and she wept but took it eke with mild mirth as high token of desire and nowise gainsaid it.

Damoer kept vigil with his arms in chapel of Fair Tower the night afore his birthday, while host of Reltur drew nigher, and in the morning Lord Roland dubbed him knight, and all at Castle Clombendorn awaited danger.

When host of Reltur had surrounded Castle Clombendorn, Sir Reltur sent herald seek surrender unto him and to his second in command, Sir Fostipos, called Mace-Swinger, to whom Elmon had been page afore his service unto Roland. Sir Reltur and Sir Fostipos were ridden out before the host but yet behind the herald. And the herald read to Roland in the castle a long list of grave affronts conceived by Reltur against Sir Reltur’s honour, which he said had been done by Lord Roland at urging of Lady Alyson. And Roland and Kenduar rode out with herald, who went behind Sir Reltur, to make answer to those charges where Reltur and Sir Fostipos sat their horses, Fostipos to left of Reltur. And Kenduar rode at left of Roland. All four knights had off their helms, as Reltur had first done off his own.

When Roland would have made his answer, Reltur said no answer could be enough save that Roland scourge his lady Alyson for having urged affront to Reltur’s honour.

“Without such punishment of woman troublesome and quarrel-making, I will lay your castle low about your ears and kill all that be within,” quoth Reltur. “I have means to do it speedily, sithen ye may see pointed at your castle walls all my new bombardrs dragon-throated to drive with stormdust from Cathay great round balls of metal hard for much destruction. The stormdust be not in my bombardrs yet, nor yet the metal balls, but they be stored and ready, and ye have not strength attack my host in such wise as may forestall their loading. But when I start to load my bombardrs, nothing will content me after but that you and your castle be utterly destroyed. Ye have until I raise my hand as sign to bombardmen who wait, that ye may choose how shall my will prevail. Today must change the way of war forever, and I shall gain great fame therefor. I rede ye deem this no idle threat, but very promise.”

“Fear ye not such magic as may be used against unliving matter misused in war, wherewith I saved ye and many men aforetime?” asked Kenduar. “For even use of cleanly bombard allowed by custom now among knights yet deemed most

chivalrous, beareth taint of undue mixing by the unalive into the deeds of men, so that an unmaking by the unalive of those unliving things that men have made with hands may be withstood by magic white, with walls upheld by it against boulders from those bombards clean, as in the siege of Clombendorn by Cordimas. And such power as ye now would draw upon is even more akin to magic black that calleth on the power of the dead, as in very necromancy. For even while ye call thus upon the storm-force of unliving weather, we may say, which itself be sorcery when used in war, ye yet make use of mean uncleanness in making of it ready. For stormdust of Cathay be mixed in part of gleanings from foul dung, and also is it corned with piss of men, which may be seemly for banishing of demons but accordeth not with honour in warfare of us men. That warranteth my wielding white magic against the use thereof, the more sithen such mixing of unliving and alive will make much worse disorder if it be left unchecked.”

“The men that made my stormdust thus, and they that are to use it in my bombards, were told aforetime that they would make magic of kind that is at hand for mortals not in traffick strait with High or fallen high. Such common man’s awareness that he be making lesser magic black doth bar a wizard from using magic white to counter it. At least, so sayeth rede that I have had. Be that sound

rede or ill?”

“Sound rede indeed, but yet ill rede,” quoth Kenduar. “Such mixing of magic and mechanic art may well be countered with same kind of mingling, if time enough be given, and that mingling have I made ready with aid of Sir Elmon, my pupil in music who surpasseth me. For we were well forewarned.” Sir Reltur then turned white and then was red with rage. Sir Fostipos did frown.

Quoth Kenduar: “Yon silver flute Sir Elmon holdeth where he sitteth horse outside the gate, will give us music wholly man-made, though flute itself be made with magic. That music will be of a kind to make your stormdust shiver fiercely in its barrels and then wake up such storm therefrom as will destroy much men and belike will much dismay what of your host it leaveth living.

“I rede ye now surrender to justice of Lord Roland and send away the host ye hired with dragon hoard.”

“So, then, our Elmon hath become a wizard-pupil?” quoth Sir Fostipos most easily and with seeming kindness. For Elmon as page had liked and served him well. “Make mock of him for that I must.” And he lightly spurred his horse and made as if to call to Elmon. But as he passed Lord Roland in mood so seeming light, he suddenly swung mace from saddlebow in backhand stroke that dashed

out Roland's brains. And at that dastard stroke was Elmon wroth as he were wood, and he cast aside the silver flute and rode at Fostipos and, after some swift passages at arms, slew him in fierce fight and fair. But Sir Reltur smote Sir Elmon from behind and cut off his head and made at Kenduar, who left his horse and got himself by magic back to castle gate, where he snatched up magic silver flute to try the magic whereat Elmonfilon had been more skilled. But the flute in being flung aside had struck a stone and now was bent and twisted, and might not be repaired in time to make the needful music. Then got Kenduar speedily into castle and made the magic he had readied aforetime, and sent speedily the folk of Ordilans to those places they had chosen, save for a serf named Manloc, who pleaded be allowed to go by secret passageway beyond the enemy host, sithen he had a brother who had gone to visit folk in Boriosin's manor and had not come back, before the summoning to castle. And Damoes gave rede that Manloc be allowed to go, for Damoes thought much of loyalty to kin. And last to leave were grief-struck Alyson and Salmittena and lovely Loeloma, with Kenduar, for England. And Damoes stood on steps of Tower Fair for to await the Griffin of the West. And as the outer walls first broke to blast of balls new-fangle from dragon-throat new bombard, the Griffin of the West flew over inner wall and alighted. It

crouched with mien most royal at foot of tower stair. Damoes got quickly upon its back and held the two black feathers told of, and rode over walls, in awkward sitting, to manor of Sir Rodoan. They did alight in woods wherein Damoes did see, or deemed he saw, and heard, a young man seeking sway with speech a maiden plain of face unto her lying with him. And Damoes knew of that young man, from bragging done in drink, that he was oft betrayer of maidens guileless, and he was minded to warn the maid. But he bethought him it would not be part of king to meddle in a matter privy to those two, wherein the will to avoid evil ought lie within the one who might be otherwise be played upon, and much less would it be duty of a king to risk his kingship therefor, unless the maid seek justice of him afterward. And so he made, albeit he pitied maiden, a sign to Griffin great that it should crouch, and he got upon its back and they moved on. And the Griffin bore him to a glade in Reltur's lands where fifteen hireling men-at-arms of Reltur held captive the serf Manloc and his younger brother Brynan and threatened them with death unless they told all they knew or aught might guess anent the whereabouts of Roland's family but foremost of Damoes himself. And Brynan, who knew naught thereof, was trying with speech to sway Manloc tell them all he knew, but Manloc so far was refusing.



“Young Damoes is rightful lord of Ordilans and Clombendorn, now that his sire be slain, and it was by his loyal kindness I was able seek my brother,” Manloc told the men-at-arms. “I will not betray him now, even if he be safe from harm of such betrayal, as I do trust. Brynan, Brynan, ye ought to be ashamed.”

“It was his duty fight for us,” quoth Brynan. “Sithen he hath not fought for Clombendorn unto his death or ours, we owe him naught. He held not out against the traitor foes of Ordilans. We need only follow his own deeds.” At those words was heart of Damoes most sore, and he wished he could set forth to those two the weird he followed. But himseemed indeed that his bond with them had thus been sundered as was said, and neither side now owed the other fealty.

“Enough,” said chief among the men of Reltur. “Choose with no more ado, life or death, while I do count to twenty. I will grant ye grace that I count slowly, under breath, that I meddle not with your reckoning.”

Then was Damoes most troubled, for he deemed that Manloc deserved not killing though Brynan might, and it was part of kingship to forbid such murder of either of those men. But then he asked himself whether king ought risk his kingship’s ruin to forestall a murder of men to whom he was not king or even lord. He pondered whether king be king to all he doth encounter in his realm, both

good and bad, or only to such as he be sworn to render them his justice and the justice of Most High so far as mortal king be able, or whether the duties of a king do overshadow in any wise the duties belonging to a man foremost as man. He pondered whether any man hath duty for to face foes outnumbering in his seeking justice for another: whether any man who ought defend should deem it sure that foes will fight unfairly. As he pondered thus unseen without choice made, the chief of Reltur's hirelings drew forth dagger for cutting throats, and Manloc cried out, "Alas my young lord Shinkicker, undone by evil magic! Else had thou been a very Arthur unto us!" And at that word was the young prince wroth, for both Sir Elmon and Lord Roland had trained him to anger at right times, and he stood well forth from Griffin waiting, and drew his sword and shouted challenge and defiance and high claim unto his lordship. And prowess came upon him from the High, and he slew all fifteen foes in fierce fight in knightly fashion. But when the hirelings all were down, Brynan feared wrath of Damoes to traitor, and besides that he was much ashamed before his lordly better and his brother. So Brynan stabbed Sir Damoes in back as he was wiping of his sword, with dagger seized from foeman slain, and Sir Damoes was dead before he fell. And Manloc then slew his dastard brother in fair combat.

Thus was avoided that great ill which would have come to England from the lying with his sister Loeloma, whom he would have wed, of Arthur's foremost heir.

After Reltur had levelled Castle Clombendorn and found within the ruin thereof none dead or living nor even stain of blood therefrom, he was most wroth. But he set himself up as lord of Clombendorn, whereat the other knights thereof did smile behind their hands and then send word to Emperor of Cathay anent Sir Reltur's having used Cathayan stormdust in warfare not with demons, whereof the leech high Lee, as it had happed, had brought him word already. And the Emperor of Cathay sent a host much mightier than Sir Reltur's hireling host, a host of Cathaymen so great it needed not a magic flute of silver for to prevail, and that host defeated roundly the hireling army. And the general of that host, a son of Cathay's Emperor, took Sir Reltur and his lady Sethlinia captive for to be slaves in Cathay itself. And the Emperor set up Sir Rodoan to rule in Clombendorn under Empire of Cathay, sithen warfare of dastard using stormdust against men had therein been done and the land therefor must needs be punished according to custom of Cathay, though the Emperor deemed his punishment but light enough. And though the Empire meddled little with English customs there, the English

strain thereafter in that land gan wane, so that now the land of Clombendorn is home overmuch to Cathaymen. And where will arise next heir to Arthur's likeness and his gifts and throne, or whether that heir will achieve the fullness of his kingship, no man now knoweth.

CHRONICLES OF ARTHUR'S HEIRS

VOLUME II

THE CHRISTMAS DEED OF ARTHUR DRAKE

By

VINCENT COLIN BURKE

One day in late November, not too long ago, though it seemed long to him when he told me about it, a boy named Arthur Drake, who lived on the south coast of Newfoundland, went into the woods with his father to cut more firewood for the winter.

And while he was looking around for the trees that seemed most dead and dry, he came upon a small bent tree about as high as his head. The curve in the small tree's trunk was gradual and strong, and the tree, though it seemed only a young tree, was thicker at the base than most trees of that size, so that it reminded him at

once of a Saracen sword. And he wanted it.

For Arthur, though he lived in an outpost that then was far from any libraries, had read much, in the house of an aunt who had taught school, about the knights of old who fought in shining armour, about the kings who went on Crusades and about the fellowship of knights of Arthur the king.

And the other boys his age and older made fun of him because he read so much and because he knew much less than they about other things that mattered, and seemed most awkward. And they called him “Ducky Drake”. But he consoled himself with thinking that “drake” is also an old name for “dragon”, and he knew that the full name of Arthur, the king unknown as a boy, was Arthur Pendragon. And he knew also that a dragon that breathed fire was called a fire Drake, so that when his whimsical, dreaming mind took sometimes a practical turn, he would consider that older people often told him that reading much would help him to a better job when he was older, and he thought that he, the Drake, would fire these others when he could.

Now, Arthur had a straight sword and a dagger made of wood that he had fashioned, and it was the straight sword that the knights used whom he most admired, but he longed at moments for a scimitar, like that with which Saladin cut

the cushion swift asunder.

So when he saw the small fir tree, Arthur stepped forward quickly and took it in his left hand to bend it near the root and make it rigid for the cut.

“Find any, Arter?”

Arthur let go the tree and left it waving. “Not yet,” he said, and continued to look for firewood. His father was strict about playing, or playing's preparation, when he should be working.

But a few days later, on a Saturday, Arthur returned with his axe – it was an old one – to where he had found the tree. He shook the snow from it, for it had snowed since he was here, and struck at a place beneath the branches that would form the crossguard, and far enough beneath to keep from damaging the handle he would shape with his pocket knife.

He struck but once, to make a sloping, downward cut on one side first, but as soon as the edge touched it, the tree cracked off. He thought at first that it was rotten, and no good for making swords, but then he saw that the top of the small stump seemed sound. He bent and touched it, for it was growing dusk.

There was a small and smooth depression in the stump, as if a pebble long had lain there. And something hard and smooth was in the tree. Arthur thought then

he'd make himself a sword two-handed, and if the stone embedded in the tree fell out, would make then the hilt he first had planned. So he cut the branches very short, all but the two from which he'd make the hand guards, and started home.

But when he had nearly left the woods, at a place where another path crossed the one he followed, a dark shape loomed suddenly before him. He stared. As a smaller child, he had been afraid of horses.

But this was not a horse. A shadow as of Venus flytrap leaves he'd seen in pictures stood huge against the dull, grey sky.

"A moose," he whispered and backed up.

"No, boy, 'tis not a moose," said a voice from the trees to his left. "It is a Barakkan."

"What's a Barakkan?" Arthur called back then.

"Same as a moose," the man replied. "Except it is a Barakkan. They were here." The voice was deeper when it said the last. Something moved along the animal's back, and it took some steps forward along its path. A sled came into view which Arthur saw was harnessed to the "Barakkan," and then he saw the reins.

The sled was an ordinary sled you would have found in any outpost then and



still may find in some. Arthur and his father towed their wood on one – with thick wooden runners edged with iron and built up in front and back where they were joined with “twarts”, as Arthur’s father called them. This one was different in that the space between the “twarts”, which usually held the wood between two pairs of short and slender poles, was boarded in, except in front, where sat the man who rode it, his feet, in sealskin boots, resting upon the runners’ upturned ends.

He was tall and dark, and his eyes turned darkly upon Arthur.

“Syalnedrethan,” he said. “Giver of Gifts in Winter. I served my people well, young Christian, and now I would serve yours, though yours killed all mine.

“But it is ordained that I may not, till some one among you helps me when I have greatest need.

“And few they are who hear of it from me.

“Giddap!” The Barakkan and the sled it drew, with the man in the black-and-red plaid jacket, moved on.

And snow began to fall.

It was not snowing when Arthur reached home. He went around the house and to the woodshed, not noticing that there was light beneath the door.

The light shone from a lantern hung in the corner facing him on his left. It was

not at all a weird, strange light; a white-gas lantern would have shone like that if they had had them in those days. But the man who sat across from him upon his father’s workbench, made the unchanged building seem a chair.

He wore a long grey robe, and on the chest of it, showing out from the sides of his beard, were the straight ends of dark red lines that you somehow knew were joined in a fantastic pattern.

“I am Agvanadran, son of Garbenidor the disciple of Merlin – last wizard of Logres,” the man said.

“Why seek you a curved sword, young Arthur?” He pronounced “curved” in two parts, like “crooked”, so that there was a bend in it.

Arthur did not answer him.

“A curved sword is a cruel weapon, Arthur. It is made to cut a man to pieces instead of stabbing to the heart, as a true and chivalrous knight must ever do if he respects his foe.

“Cut the handle from your sword, young Arthur.”

Arthur went and got his father’s saw. “Cut the wood beneath the hilt,” the man then told him. “Turn the hilt a little now toward you.”

Arthur rolled the tree a little on the notched chunk of wood where he had

placed the end, and sawed. And he found the saw would go no further.

“Turn and cut upon the other side,” the wizard said.

He turned and sawed again, and found again the saw would go no further.

“Cut with your knife the wood remaining.” The wizard had not moved but only spoke.

Arthur cleared the ends of wood remaining now between the saw-cuts. And the sword-shaped wood held still together.

“Draw your blade, young Arthur.”

And Arthur looked at him.

Then Arthur took the blade part in his left hand and the handle in his right hand, and he pulled.

There was a gleaming curve of steel in his right hand. He wondered at it.

The wizard spoke again. “For many years, by curious arts, this blade has now been forming.

“In the forest was it formed, that the curved blade be friendly to northern life.

“For it must have been that this be a crooked sword, lest the wielder of it slip into mishap in its use.

“It is not a common sword, young Arthur. For though the outer edge of the

blade you bear will cut through anything, yet you will perceive the inner edge is also sharpened. But this is for another use. This edge will heal any wound upon this earth, save one made by the sword itself.

“But when the healing edge is placed upon a wound, to pull toward you, you must be sure to lean with all your weight and pull with all your strength.

“Or the wound will be more grievous.

“For you must not suppose that an enchanted sword is given to a son of man to make easy the task he does. A magic sword is sometimes needed that the task be possible at all.

“You know not much of swordplay, Arthur Drake, and it is not for me to teach you much. But look not, as when cutting wood, to see the effect of a blow that you may improve upon it with the next. When the battle comes, strike and strike again, trusting the enchantment of the blade.

“A sword like this is wielded best by your right hand. But when you heal, use both.

“You must keep the sword always by you, at all such times as a knight would have his ready. When your task is finished, the wood will leave the hilt, and you will own the sword.”

So when the wizard left – he went out through the door, as you or I would; and took the lantern with him, so that Arthur had to light his old bull’s-eye candle-lamp – Arthur picked up the tree trunk he had dropped, and smoothed the sides, so that it looked a little like a sword, but thick. And he cut the other end, and rounded it off, just beyond the length of the sword.

He put the wooden sword, as it appeared to be, in a loop tied in an old belt he had used as a swordbelt for his other “weapons”, and kept it with him at all times, except when a knight would not wear one.

He would keep it in his room at night, and take it to school with him in the morning. At first he would leave it in the hallway where the pupils left their coats, but someone tried to take it on him once or twice and he had to fight for it, and then he feared it would be taken while he was in school – for the school “washroom” was an outhouse then – so he would come to the schoolhouse through the woods and leave the weapon hidden. Nearly everyone made fun of him for taking it around with him, but he would never leave it behind, or even show them what it was, to try to frighten them.

And then one day in the third week of that December, when he was going home from school – he had been kept in after school that day because there were some

sums he couldn't do – he heard a sudden sound of movement just as he walked onto the bridge across the barrisway to his house a little further on. He looked away to his right, down the road, where the sound was coming from, and there the Barakkan was coming, in long striding leaps, with the sled behind it. And on the curve beyond the sled were swift forms dull against the snowdrifts – large animals like white and dusky dogs.

As the Barakkan gained a little more and went speeding past the bridge, Arthur dropped his books into the snow and drew his sword, to leap into the path of seven white wolves of Newfoundland. At least, he thought there were seven, but a hunter said later there were the tracks of eight.

The wolves would probably have kept on after the Barakkan, for they were running very fast, if it had not been for Arthur's sword. But they felt the menace of its deep enchantment and turned upon the boy who carried it. (The wizard hadn't told him about that part of it. They hardly ever do.)

Arthur was afraid, of course. He knew the sword wasn't going to do everything. But he struck as hard as he could at the first wolf that leaped at him and he cut off its head, together with the shoulder and forepaw on the other side – all in one piece. He used one hand, and dodged and leaped, seeing with the corner of his eye

as he slashed at one, the tail or hind leg of another, a vivid detail from a mass of moving fur.

The wolves helped him, in a way. After the first one leaped at him, they feared the sword and tried to have his body between them and it before they came at him again. When he quickly turned, they would be close together. And once, the blade swept through the body of a living wolf and through a headless body not yet fallen, so swiftly did he strike.

It could not have lasted very long. One wolf ran away when the Barakkan came charging back with antlers lowered, but it slipped on ice, fell off the bridge, and drowned under the ice across the barrisway.

Arthur turned to smile at Syalnedrethan, but he was looking at the Barakkan, which had not raised its head. It was bleeding from a deep gash in its neck, and there was blood along the first sled tracks made upon the road.

“He won’t take me home the night,” said Syalnedrethan. He touched the Barakkan upon the shoulder, and Arthur knew that though his hair was black, the man was very old.

Arthur took the sword in both hands.

“I can—” he said, but someone spoke behind him.

“Lord ‘a’ mercy, Arter, you’s not ‘urt? Who killed the dogs? Where’d you get the scy’ blade, Arter?”

There were more here than this one woman. One man had a rifle with him. “I ‘eard ‘em snarlin’ down by my place. Someone must be killed. Don’t go too close there, Annie.” And Arthur thought then that if the magic failed, or if he used not all his strength at once, no one would believe that he had killed the wolves. When the foreign-looking stranger left, they would say that he had done it all and Arthur found his weapon.

“Darn fool,” he said. “Drivin’ a moose around the woods. What do you expect? Here, put him out of his misery.” He took the sword in both his hands and cut off the moose’s head with a single blow, which showed that he could use it. The body fell down hard.

Syalnedrethan looked at Arthur. “I will bury my Barakkan,” he said. You could not say from his manner whether he was reproaching Arthur or thanking him. He lifted the body from the ground, with two men helping him a bit, and put it in the sled. He took up the fallen head himself and put it near the severed neck. Then he took the harness off and strapped it to himself and drew the sled away.

And snow began to fall as Arthur told his story.



When he went home that night, he put the sword in the woodshed. The wood was still upon the hilt, so everyone thought the weapon was his own.

And everyone was proud of him. When he said after breakfast the next morning, "I'd better get my sword. You never know when you might need one," his father did not laugh.

But when he went into the woodshed, no sword was there, but only a bright, sharp scythe blade stuck firm in the wooden hilt.

He left it there.

And there it stayed until, years later, the citizens of that town – which he wanted me not to name – took the blade and put it on display in their new community hall – the weapon of the man who, when he was still a boy, destroyed the last pack of wolves on the Island.

But Mr. Drake used to tell those who knew him well that his childishness then was the reason that children in Newfoundland still receive their Christmas gifts from Santa Claus, who is kind and jolly and generous and good but not a Newfoundlander.

(First recounted in December of 1970)

AFTERWORD

By

VINCENT COLIN BURKE

Though *The Christmas Deed of Arthur Drake* is obviously a sequel to *The Chronicle of Clombendorn* – I have no idea how many others there may have been, in the centuries between the two – it preceded the *Chronicle* in my acquaintance of them, by what I might once have thought to be coincidence. That story of the more modern Arthur Drake was first written for the 1970 Christmas supplement of *The Western Star*, the west Newfoundland daily newspaper, by what I have always regarded as a great stroke of luck.

I, a reporter back on the job since September after taking a year off, from a career begun less than three years before, to pursue creative writing (most unsuccessfully, for want of imagination), was wholly at a loss for a feature for

that special section, when an old man phoned my apartment one evening, saying he would like to tell me a story of his boyhood which he thought “has got what I believe you newsmen call A Christmas Angle.” I went to his house and took my notes on what he told me, and the result is here for you as it was for readers of *The Western Star* in 1970.

The following March, a much more mysterious man arrived at that apartment at 54 Bell's Hill, Corner Brook – now replaced by a huge shopping mall of which almost the only redeeming feature is a Coles Book Store. He gave no name, left no address for me to reach him later, and told me he represented interests with which I seemed to be sympathetic and which were prepared to work with me for our common benefit and the edification of many – provided the many could be induced to co-operate in the role of audience. I believed that at least there would be a writeable news story somewhere in the situation, and I listened. I was a more eager listener then than I am now.

“We liked the way you reported on the story you received from Mr. Arthur Drake, though it is unfortunate your editor (I presume) insisted on labelling it fiction when it appeared in the Christmas supplement,” he said. “Still, no great harm was done by that. One of our people also remarked favourably on the

‘Scrutator’ essays when you tried to get them published during your year off. We can help advance the causes you sought to promote in those essays and in the column you wrote before you took that year, but it may take a lot of patience and much more writing on your part. In the meantime, I mean to test your abilities a bit further, if you’ll allow: I have for you some material in Latin, in which you should be proficient enough for our purposes, which we would like you to resolve into a short story, or possibly a short short.”

I did that, with the aid of my trusty Latin-English, English-Latin dictionary from seminary days, and when he came back he pronounced himself pleased with the short short that resulted, and gave me the pseudonym Scymnus du Berg to associate with it in its final form. He left me further material in Latin from which I drew other short short stories during the next few years.

This mysterious man came to me again in the fall of 1976, when I was living at 18 Humber Park in Corner Brook, and said he had for me another project, somewhat different from the matter for the “Narbicana stories” I had begun to circulate among my friends. “This one,” said he, “was really written by Scymnus du Berg, who I may say was probably an ancestor of yours. It was written in England and in English, not long after *Le Morte d’Arthur*, but now is unknown to

English literature at large, though it seems Robert Browning had access to a copy no longer available to us, since *Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came* obviously is based on this story. Fortunately, it has been preserved, though only in Latin, in Tellares.”

“Where or what is Tellares?” I asked, excusably enough I felt.

“That will be made clear in due course, and you may then reveal it through the means in which it becomes apparent to you.”

“All right.” I had confidence in him enough for that.

He gave me the first part, and I wrote the translation in a style I deemed appropriate (my selection thereof was part of the testing, I found later) – I had, after all, read and enjoyed Malory and William Morris. In setting that style and pursuing it later, I proved (though I’d no idea of their views at the time) the disciple of C. S. Lewis, writing in *Of This and Other Worlds*, rather than Ursula K. LeGuin (if I read properly *From Elfland to Poughkeepsie*) on whether archaism must be philologically accurate. Had I the learning, I should have preferred to follow what I took to be Ms. LeGuin’s approach, but Lewis’s is a tenable position. (I have his authority for that.) At any rate, my associate approved my version, and I don’t now think it necessary to make any changes not dictated

by development – some, fairly close to me, call it degeneration – of my own taste.

In later months, my associate gave me more of the same story, until I had completed *The Tale of the Dark Tower*, which now is *Book I* of the finished chronicle. I tried a number of times, even with the help of an agent who found it appealing, to have it published, as my associate requested. But that story was too short, as it turned out, even for an illustrated book, in which guise, Mr. John Davey of Blackwell Publishers advised, it might have had a chance. It was also rejected by every magazine to which I sent it, though one editor (very famous in some circles) remarked that “The suspense is finely woven and overall [sic] it is a very fine tale indeed.” (He offered to look at anything I might send him after that, but I spoiled my welcome by submitting something of my own.)

Then, in November of 1977, from a number of causes, I suppose, one of them associated with the reasons for my extra work, I went completely insane, in a psychotic episode due apparently to schizophrenia, or possibly bi-polar disorder (I had long had the energy associated with being manic-depressive), and for a long while, perhaps because of being thoroughly tranquilized, had little heart for any work not strictly required to earn a living, and not a great deal for that. (I’d been off work a total of about three weeks, in cracking up and recovering, and was

allowed to ease very gradually into full production again, by my superiors at *The Western Star*.) I did, however, manage to translate a brief tale containing the factual background for *Don Quixote*. And I tried to sell *The Tale of the Dark Tower* as part of a collection of short stories from du Berg and me, but that failed, too. Two more bouts of madness – my family doctor at the time preferred “psychotic episode”, but that verbal vehicle doesn’t handle smoothly in ordinary conversational traffic – followed, in 1979 and 1981, when medications were discontinued for what seemed good reason at the time.

It was not until 1983, when I was living at 96 West Street (still Corner Brook, of course), that I again felt up to working much for my mysterious associates. The usual messenger gave me the rest of what then we called *Merlin’s Revenge*, and I finished the rest of the translation in fairly short order. I have been trying to sell it ever since, with the help for three years of the agent who had represented me in presenting *The Tale of the Dark Tower* and who had asked to see more if, as she thought most unlikely, it could be extended; the main difficulties with the longer version, she told me, were what was still brevity of manuscript and the individual tastes of editors. (Told of this, rather recently, one snarky person remarked that it was too bad those editors had taste.)

That was too bad, for a while at least, for the project was meant to finance full-time work by me for my mostly unknown associates; they could not then afford to pay me on their own, apparently. That has changed; I now live independent of most employers, trying to sell the present product and another du Berg manuscript called *The Kryffyr Quest*, as well as my own *Chronicles of Angle Stream* and Adolphus Brown’s diary *The Elves of Autumn*, which is about an interaction of Elfland and Newfoundland, while writing essays which deal with themes similar to those of such books. My associates felt *The Kryffyr Quest* especially, derived from a sheer mass of material, demanded a newspaper reporter’s touch – of a kind, I might add, not necessarily found in the graduates of today’s journalism schools: “We want a deeds-and-dialogue man,” was the expression I remember.

*The Kryffyr Quest* adds to a Narbicana story (offered once or twice with no success as *The Village of the Kryffyr*) done in 1977. For that also I’ve used the “du Berg” name, partly because I was told I ought and partly as a way of distancing myself from the stories while suggesting they have, for me at least, a common source. (My immediate associate took back the original Latin material after I finished my own work with it.)

My immediate associate has showed up a few more times in the last few years,



supplying me off and on with stories of a detective-knight-errant on another world (no connection with Tellares that I know of) and reviewing my efforts to get published what I made of his material. He is so far apparently satisfied that those efforts, though vain, are constant and more or less well directed. But when he came to my mother’s house in Port au Port East in November of 1995, he was thoroughly pleased that *Merlin’s Revenge* had still got nowhere – nowhere beyond some highly appropriate private circulation.

“The copy we had was faulty,” said he. “The man responsible for sending it to Tellares after the death of du Berg was leery of its intimations of a certain way of war he thought would corrupt the Tellareans – who were already, if the truth be told, well informed in such matters and little or not at all inclined to that particular kind of corruption. So the blighter utterly suppressed *Book Five*, even changing around in an earlier book two apparently minor characters, to make sure it couldn’t be suggested one of them became highly prominent later on. He switched two names to make it seem that a certain man had been killed, when he hadn’t been. People who’ve had a chance to compare the versions will know the man at once, and those who haven’t need not concern themselves. Fortunately, we are fairly sure that the copy we’ve got now is one of very few made by the author

himself, and it includes details which were missing from our first copy. It seems he wanted Tellaes to have what he deemed an accurate Latin translation. The added length and lore should help you find a publisher fairly soon after you’ve homogenized the style of your translation of the whole. Though it should have been enough for any publisher who values literature that even *Merlin’s Revenge* not only gives the whole narrative background missing so long for Browning’s poem but also throws a wholly new and utterly illuminating light on a most curious incident in Malory. Booksellers these days are entirely too commercial.

“You will notice, I dare say,” added my associate, “that *The Clombendorn Chronicle*, as the whole ought now be called, records a certain recurrent effort of the High, of a kind for which They apparently selected you as their record-transcriber when you opened your ears for a certain interview in your newspaper career. This and other facts has prompted our searching in Newfoundland itself for a copy of a sequel to our chronicle which apparently had been set somewhere in the future – in what is still the future, I mean, not only future for the medieval scribe himself. Lord Baltimore was the last we are certain to have had that particular copy – fairly certain, anyway. And that is about all I am authorized to tell you at the moment. Thank you, yes, I will have a cup of tea and some of those

most appetizing tea-buns. Were they done by Margaret McCormack, here in Port au Port? I thought so.” And then we talked of other things, which “pertain not to the tale as it is told.” So here, finally, is the complete work of which *Merlin’s Revenge*, that we had thought stood by itself and ended with *Book IV*, is but a major part. Bits have been added since that visit of my associate, when new research turned up other copies with extra detail.

The alert and knowledgeable reader will see it for himself, of course, but I can’t help pointing out that if *The Chronicle of Clombendorn* was indeed written by a contemporary of Sir Thomas Malory, it contains prophecies, or at least hints of prophecy, which were clearly fulfilled in this century, as established in those records made by C. S. Lewis and Sanders Anne Laubenthal.

Some years after my writing all that – the Coles book store has moved since then – my associate returned with the manuscript he’d last mentioned, though he didn’t actually say that it had been got, as I suspected, from Ferryland. I don’t know now how many years later that was or how long ago; my memory no longer recalls specific years, after 1989, in which things happened, of which I seem otherwise to have good remembrance. But I had from my associate recently an e-mail with a section of new manuscript attached; he said that what I had been

given before had omitted this, because the Tellarean translator into Latin had not wanted it to mention the justification which future “Canadian Choosists” apparently will claim for their position rejecting claims of justice which some deem evident to “right reason.” Anyway, here is a medieval seer’s account of some events he beheld which will not occur until the very far future, though it may seem at first a future fairly near. He himself explains why, though not at once.

Vincent Colin Burke

Port au Port, Nfld.

July 8, 2011

CHRONICLES OF ARTHUR'S HEIRS

VOLUME III

A SIGHT OF AVALON

By

SAMUEL DU BERG

CHAPTER 1

He beyond the sea who Arthur's kingship ought rightly to inherit will rise in Avalon, I have been given to behold, where Arthur had gone quickly, in magic barge that sped upon Atlantic's waters smoothed into calmest pathway, to die. And die he well-nigh did, in arms of her on whom he begot, with what he deemed his last living effort, that distant heir's halfbreed (as men would come to say)

forefather. That was afore he rolled aside unto the sleep wherefrom he woke not on this earth but rather, said one who ought to know, within that realm where, later far, as friend of Pendragon Elwin Ransom will rehearse in goodly book, Tor and Tinidril will rule. And that foremother of his far-off rightful heir he had taken in delirium for his own Guinevere deemed then never faithless, so wood he was as at that time.

The heir that ought rightly to inherit was born in hospital named for Clare, the saintly sister of Saint Francis, for his mother had been visiting her own sister in St. John's, that was the chief city of that land found anew by an Italian for an English king, and he grew up in Port au Port East. The mother of that heir, whom she called Radverg to humour a whim of her husband his father, returned soon to Port au Port with him her firstborn, and another sister who had stayed with the two in St. John's, who lived in nearby Stephenville upon an army base, travelled with her in what men called "The Bullet". That was a train of carriages drawn by an "engine car" wherein relays of the passengers took turns on pedal apparatus to generate the force akin to lightning which made certain cunning machinery to turn the metal wheels of that said car upon steel twin rails, held apart together by being fixed to short lengths of hard wood that lay between them. The young mother and

the aunt of Radverg much enjoyed that journey, whereon the mother was exempt from “motor energization” and the aunt indulged therein her own great passion for exercise to keep her fit for combat. And Radverg’s mother hight Ruth and her sister hight Irene; they had two other sisters, besides her that dwelt in capital, that were in convent in other parts of Newfoundland, that at the time whereof the tale now telleth bore style of Avalon Isle. It was so styled to sever the name of island only from the name of the whole province, whereto a part of a great mass of land to west did eke belong, and that part hight Labrador. And to a smaller part of that island, that part rightly called the Avalon aforetime, had come a certain Lord Baltimore from our own England and dwelt short time afore he settled elsewhere southward on mighty continent to west, hight North America, which territory he settled he called Maryland.

Ruth and Irene and baby Radverg were met by a “motor” carriage for hire – which worked upon the same force as The Bullet, although therein the force was “generated” (as men said then) by movement unalive, through cunning application of a gaseous element hight hydrogen – at Stephenville Crossing, the “railway station” nighest Port au Port. The Crossing was thirteen miles afar, and the law permitted “motor” travel for that distance and for greater, so long as

babies under five years of age were transported thus. And thereby Ruth Abbott did convey her son to her home and her husband's – it had first been his, inherited from his father – and that had been a fine house by the reckoning of that day, having been built long time afore for an author that prospered by his making of high romance and who had loved luxury.

When the motor carriage drew up in the front lane of that house – such lane was then called “driveway” – he that steered the carriage – who was called a “driver”, though he drove naught alive that might go afore him – looked (to my own thought, which might be error) as if he felt an old envy at sight thereof. For it was a goodly house. It had on each end of that northward side that fronted road, across from holdings of glebe and parish school, a pair of bay windows that stood out three-sided, for the house was long, and the window of each pair of bays had another window flat between, so that there were on each side of the front door that was in the middle of that wall a set of three whole rooms, and in the middle of each set a smaller room. And there was over each set of bays a high gable that peaked above the smaller window, and a lower, wider gable over the front door, wherefrom five steps led down.

A man was waiting by that door as carriage entered driveway, and he ran unto



the carriage and he gazed with wonder at his son and with delight upon his wife, and welcomed right heartily his sister-in-law, with whose presence at their house he was well pleased when she was upon furlough from the army, for then would he and she hold much sport in swordplay in the long and wide “multi-purpose room” that ran along the back of the three northward rooms at the eastward end: between those rooms and two at the back that were used for laundry and for firewood storage. They went not thereto at once, indeed. George Abbott led the way unto main bedroom, which was first room to right of the front hallway and had in it a large bed sumptuous and other wooden furniture of much luxury, which the three meseems took much for granted, and the bed had at its hither side a cradle cunningly carved, though not as it were done by craftsman of this present age, and Ruth Abbott laid therein the baby boy. Irene used when she did visit them to stay for night that room which was beyond the indoor privy and room for washing and for bathing, between the bay-windowed rooms of westward half of Abbott home. And Radverg was baptized and given formal naming upon the Sunday which followed next this bringing of him home. And at that baptizing George Abbott told the priest that “Radverg” had taken much his fancy as the name of knights in two old tales he much enjoyed when he was young, the first

whereof he would often read to his son later on. So the priest suggested “Albert” as a second and more Christian name, and George Abbott was nothing loth thereto, nor was Ruth.

The next beholding that I had of Radverg Abbott, he was nigh three years old and with his mother in their kitchen, that was the room between his father’s study and the family’s chief dining room for high occasion; these were the eastward rooms at front. Young Radverg asked his mother for a “gingersnap”, that was a kind of hard and thin sweet cake.

“All right, sweetie,” said Ruth. “Shall I get it for you or shall I lift you up to get it for yourself?”

“Lift me up?”

“Good choice. Here.” She gripped him from behind, beneath the arms and held him up to a high shelf where rested a small metal container with a cover fitting tight. They called it a “tin”. The child lifted the tin in both hands, but it slipped and fell to bench beneath the shelf, with sharp clash.

“Bad choice,” said the child.

“Not really. The cookies may be broken, but I helped you help yourself, and you did your best, instead of depending on someone else to do it all for you.

That’s very good. Always remember that that’s the way our people work together, helping one another do as much as possible for ourselves. Here are two gingersnaps. Want milk with them?”

“Mommy help me get it?”

“That’s beyond your present skill, I think. You have to grow in skill, and your daddy and I will help you grow. That’s what people help each other with. Besides, our doing things for children while they grow to do things on their own, is a good way we honour the Child Jesus.”

“Get me more gingersnaps. Honour child Jesus.”

“Listen, brat.” She “slapped” his mouth lightly with two fingers. His eyes filled. “Be sure you correct your children if they talk like that to parents – or any other elders. That’s wrong. Don’t cry. I forgive you if you’re sorry.” She kissed him.

## CHAPTER 2

She that was to play the Morgan Fay to Radverg Abbott’s Arthur was nigh on four years old when he was brought to Port au Port. I had of her a seeing, and of her parents, when she was of the age of ten years or nigh thereto. Her father hight Esheral and her mother Amalumea, though indeed they were of blended stock Irish, English and Scots and their people had been “Newfoundlanders” for some generations. For they were of the Eastern doctrines, or versions thereof, that are called Buddhists, and they and their near forefathers had taken names they deemed fittingly Easternish. Their daughter they had named Nimualë, and they were surnamed Bennett.

I had first beheld that family in their home at Kippens hard upon the boundary of Stephenville. I learned from later seeings wherein I also heard, that teachers

locally of Buddhist doctrine deferred much to that couple and that those two were highly influential among the “movers and shakers” – a colloquialism of the age – of the Bay St. George area as of that time. Esheral, who had married late, was a senior officer at the army base; Buddhists and Catholics were nigh of equal number there, as they were by then in most of the land called Canada that was the truly northern realm of North America as at that time. When I beheld then Nimualë, she was stroking the large head of a large and noble-looking dog that was of the kind called German Shepherd or, in some lands of Europe then, Alsatian.

“May we keep him?” young Nimualë was saying as I gan see and hear. “He came home with me from school. He’d been about the grounds there for about two days before he picked me out.”

“Followed you home, did he?” said Esheral.

“He seemed to lead me home, really, Daddy. He kept ahead of me the whole time and turned into the lane here before I did.”

The dog looked at Esheral and nodded.

“Look at that!” quoth Esheral. “You’d think he understood her, wouldn’t you?”

The dog looked him in the eye and nodded again.

“Lordtunderenholygeez!” said Esheral, who was as much a Newfoundlander as he was a Buddhist.

The dog traced with right forepaw, without making mark, a sign upon their floor.

“Looks like an ‘M,’” said Amalumea. The dog nodded. “Oh, Absolute!” quoth she. “What’s going on! Are you a Bodhisattva, feller!” The dog nodded again.

Then he traced again the ‘M’ and then more letters.

“Morse code,” said Esheral. “Got it, f— Sir.” Esheral knew that code, wherein the dog conveyed to him by a series of winkings of his right eye that he could convey meaning to them better with a ‘typewriter’ if they had one, and they had. That was a device for making letters upon paper with inked ribbons struck by tokens, right rapidly at the end of little levers, or something of that sort. He tapped with the longest toe of his right forepaw, with which meseemed he must have practiced much afore time, right rapidly upon those ends of levers which signified what letter was to be writ. He told them his name was Bhutofel and the Elder Enlightened had meant for them to keep him as if he were their pet, for he was to teach Nimualē much that she ought to know, which they could confirm by

meditating, and they were to tell no one what or who he really was, for that Catholic neighbours disbelieving of Bodhisattva were most like to deem his converse with the Bennetts to be strait witchcraft.

As time went by, I saw Bhutofel tell the parents Bennett, who came to love and trust him much, that Nimualë was meant by the Enlightened Elder Ones, that had been Transferred to the Absolute, as he put it, to have a son that would render the Buddhism of their particular fashion to be the supreme religion of that part of earth at least and thereby teach right thinking and right doing to a large much of mankind. He did not tell them right at once what sort of deeds would be needful therefor. But he began by telling them that Lieutenant Irene Barnable, with whom then they had formed firm friendship, was a woman much to be admired and imitated, especially by the young of her own sex. It was known, in the circles wherein moved their intimates, that the parents Bennett chose friends out of unselfish admiration rather than from motives of self-interest so far as such might be but of this world at least.

Now, when the Bodhisattva had gained the Bennetts' great trust, he told them of arts that would forestall the budding of Nimualë's breasts when she was come to the age therefor, that she might be great warrior, and he said the Elder

Enlightened that had been transferred had consented to application of those arts in cases rare of women needing much prowess in the Military. That art's application would not, however, make Nimulë barren but only need that her children, when it was time for her to bear, have another woman for to nurse them. And he gave rede that Nimualë should conceive by Radverg in his father's house or else that Nimulë gain possession of that house and conceive therein by another man, to have a son who would make Buddhistry supreme in Canada. For it had been foretold that a great man would be begotten there. And Bhutofel gave rede that the latter course, if followed, should be carried out upon Nimulë's leaving the army, wherein he said she was meant by the Elder Enlightened to be captain for a time. For women, like Irene Branable, who were in armed forces were sworn not to lie with men during military career.



### CHAPTER 3

At breakfast one morning, little Radverg said: “I wanted to sleep in your bed last night. Why did you lock me out?”

“We were conducting the natural ceremony proper to married people which celebrates people’s being able to have children – at such times as it isn’t actually invoking that blessing of the Maker,” quoth his father.

“You were conducting,” murmured Ruth.

“Did you use incense?” asked the boy.

“It entailed interesting smells, but no incense, no,” said George. Ruth laughed. George said: “It’s important that this ceremony not be interrupted. That’s why we locked our door.”

“Oh. Okay.”

At my fourth beholding of him, Radverg was nigh five years, looking into a book his father read to him, anent knights of this present age or nigh thereto.

“Daddy?”

“Yeah, son?”

“Why is it ‘wunse upon a time’? Why isn’t it ‘Onss upon a time’ or ‘Wuns upwun a time’?”

Ruth, nursing her second child, their first daughter, in a nearby rocking chair, threw back her head and laughed. “Nobody knows for sure why sometimes the same letters stand for differing sounds,” said George. “You have to be told aloud which letters stand for which and when, but you learn to tell the patterns apart, sometimes from context only when you read. But you’re going to do very well at it, my boy.”

“Time I buckled down to teach you reading,” said Ruth. “Past time, in fact.”

“Will I go to school earlier?” asked Radverg.

“Nope,” his father made answer. “The more apt you are for schooling the better you will learn before you go to school. First you’ve got to learn to add and subtract and maybe multiply and divide, and, most of all, you’ve got to learn what you can about the world around you by growing into the life of the farm.” Beyond

a small wood of fir behind the big house, the Abbott land stretched some furlongs south to a steep, wooded slope across which, eastwise, a path went down to a long strip of round beach-rocks wherefrom the family and their friends enjoyed swimming during summers hot in cold water nicely deep but soon from shore, and whereon they also had in that season many a refreshing picnic around fire of salt-smelt driftwood. And that land twixt a field to west, that was made for playing only and for a given kind of game with bat and ball at that, and a wooded small glen to east, where young males played oft a warfare game hight "cowboys", was tilled for growing vegetables, especially one called potato that is unknown in Europe in this present age but will be brought here when discovered in America. And the Abbotts kept pigs and rabbits that they fed partly on potato stalk and leaf and whiles on turnip tops. The back property was fenced with pickets between the playing field and the wooded glen, and had a large barn to eastward side of wood that sheltered house, where kept they horse and cow, the cow for dairy supply and the horse for saddle riding and for drawing carriage or wagon, having been trained from colthood to both usages.

"You may have an aptitude for numbers to go with that for word-sign," George Abbott said then to Radverg. "How many fingers am I holding up?"

Radverg laughed. “Four. Everyone knows—”

“What is four?”

“Everyone – What do you mean, Dad?”

“Do you know what four is?”

“Four is four. Right?”

“What do two and two make up?”

“Four.”

“What do three and one make?”

“Four.”

“One and three?”

“Four.”

“Two and one and one?”

“Four.”

“So all those number-joins are ‘parts’ of four?”

Radverg laughed with much delight and said a word not heard in this age of men, a word without defined meaning that expressed much feeling.

“Wow. Yeah.”

“A number is an idea that counts anything you can see or hear or think of, even

other numbers. It’s like a light reflecting off the corners of the world when your mind looks at things a certain way. You should look at things that way quite often, in moments apparently quite idle, to see how many numbers you can see – best in sets of ten, of course – while you stay aware of those numbers’ properties. Look at the stars that way, and at leaves and twigs on trees. If that develops a scientific outlook in the next several years while you study other things at home, you’ll do very well when you go to school at ten.” Radverg looked largely unwitting of his father’s meanings, if I may judge a child so far hence.

“Will I talk Latin and Greek at school, too?”

“Some teachers will talk Greek to you, some Latin and some English. They’ll build on what we’ve done with you.” George spoke Latin in the home most of the time and Ruth spoke Greek, except that on every second day they both spoke to their children in English only, and for the more part George and Ruth read to them in English from English books, that they might the more dearly love the native tongue.

When again I beheld young Radverg and a parent, he was sitting to the right of Ruth upon a “daybed,” while again she nursed her baby girl. Ruth said to him, caressing his head: “Would you feel jealous if I told you I loved someone more

than you my firstborn?”

“Who is that?”

“Every mother ought to love Our Lord Christ more than any of her own children. He it is that wants us to love them in Himself, and He is, of course, God Almighty. He makes our children worthy of the greatest possible love wherewith we mothers could ever love our children, which is the love that God has for His own Son Jesus.

“Oh. Okay.”

“So that’s all right with you?”

“Sure, Mom. Jesus is the greatest. He had Dad get me that new cap-gun when I asked Him for it.” Ruth smiled, shook her head. Radverg added, “He’s supposed to love me even more than you do, right?”

“Right you are, son. He does indeed. That’s why I love you so much.”

I next had sight and hearing of George and Radverg Abbott in converse on Radverg’s seventh birthday, whereon George relayed unto his son, in the presence of their whole family, the command of the Canadian Bishops that the laymen of their dioceses were to be concerned in thought and discourse anent the Divine Nature only with what natural reason without aid could teach of God, and

that what might be learned by reason under the light of Revelation, beyond what Scripture straitly states in its own words, was reserved unto clergy ordained. That was because the Catholic Laity were meant by God to serve Him chiefly in imitation of His being Maker in His Oneness, it was said. The Clergy Learned would instruct the Lay in those duties which were required by Revelation, and the doing of those deeds was enough for the Lay to learn. The secular law of Canada, which upheld religious regulations so far as citizens adhering to a given religion were agreed it might so do, commanded the state to seize the dwelling property of any who defied that law of the Catholic Church in Canada. And George said it was his duty, as it was of every father in the diocese unto his own sons and daughters, to repeat that instruction most important on each of Radverg's birthdays thereafter until his fourteenth birthday.

At the next beholding whereof the tale should tell, Radverg was nigh nine, or so meseemed. George was sitting in his favourite armchair of the general usage room, which differed from the favourite of his own study that had a many books enow to astonie scholars in this present age. Radverg leaned on George's knee and looked up into his face. George put down his book.

“What's wrong with Mawlers, Dad?”

“Why do you ask?”

“When we play Elias Crane against the cops, I always play a cop with a baton, when I’m a cop, and Johnny called me a Mawler. He said I think like a Mawler.”

“Well, there’s nothing wrong with them, except they have higher ideals than we, and some think they’re too impractical. But they call themselves Traditionals, of course, and traditions are most often highly practical. But they don’t look down on us like that, though they’d fight us quick as that” – he snapped his fingers – “if we gave them an excuse they could accept. The people of Point au Mal and their Cache Valley believe that using fuel-powered machines surrenders life-privilege to the unliving, and they believe that’s wrong. We believe such machines are a rich gift from God that we’re too likely to abuse, so we set limits, by our own laws, on our enjoyment of the privilege they offer. For instance, federal law in Canada allows a maximum of one fourth of the total number of citizens in any given district to be engaged in production and use of fuel-powered machines, so that living usage must be predominant throughout our whole society. Traditionals use only those weapons that get their danger from the users’ own energy, and we allow use of firearms in combat, but all of us in this country agree that no matter what kinds of weapons we deem lawful, all fighters must fight fair,



no matter what we fight about. We're all agreed that the greatest thing that can be fought about, whether we call it God's own justice or simply the Rightness of Utter Transcendence, isn't so fragile we have to stoop to meanness to defend it or ourselves whose lives are given us so that we may obey and serve it. Rightness Rules, as you say when you play Elias Crane against the cops. Though that wasn't Crane's own war cry, if I know anything of history, and I think I've read all the old newspaper accounts of the case.

“The principle we all accept now, all of us all across Canada, is simply that if you want to do anything hurtful to anyone who doesn't himself agree that he deserves it, you've got to face that injury at least as surely as he does; and in a fair fight, no kind of harm is sure to one side more than another; if you can't take it, it doesn't belong to you to give to someone else. That's what Elias fought for most of all, when they tried to take his treasure that belonged to his father and grandfather first, and tried to make him call himself a criminal because he cherished it, though he broke no law that he himself acknowledged – and to obey only laws that you acknowledge right was admitted only justice even in the Middle Ages.” (He meant this present age, that men in time to come were – will be – wont from ignorance much to contemn unduly.) “Don't ever forget that, son.

But Mr. Crane never fought with anyone to prevent the use of fuel-powered machines, although by his own lights in theory he might have had the right had he so chosen, since he always said that forsaking movement made by fuel consumption would be the choice of them that sought perfection in natural human life. Anyway, don’t you despise the men of Point au Mal, and don’t call them ‘Mawlers’ if that’s meant to demean them. I say it myself, in casual converse, but I never mean it that way. Some tend to think about them so because they want so little to do with us; a road we used to have to Point au Mal, on our side of Pine Tree, is long gone, so that we ‘outsiders’ have to go there by boat or by paths down Pine Tree or through the tunnel their forefathers built through Pine Tree to Cache Valley.” He tousled his son’s hair. “Getting a bit near bedtime?”

“There was a road to there on our side of Pine Tree?” Said with a great deal of newly awakened interest.

“Bedtime?”

“Aww, Dad!”

“You’ll have to go even earlier next Tuesday night, because next Wednesday it’s my turn to read ‘The Short History’ before the holiday begins.” He meant *The Short History of the Crane Rebellion*, which teachers at schools across Canada

took turns reading to their school's assembled staff and pupils on the anniversary of Crane's arrest that led to his being imprisoned for defying laws of Canada anent "firearms control" and its Supreme Court's judgement that such laws accorded with the country's constitution.

#### CHAPTER 4

Here the tale rehearseth that *Short History of the Crane Rebellion* which one teacher at every school in Canada read, each teacher taking one turn in a year, to the school’s assembled staff and pupils on the anniversary of Elias Crane’s arrest that led to his being imprisoned. It is indeed a short history, though a long lecture. I heard and saw George Abbott deliver it in the school in Port au Port East while his family in especial watched and listened, they with much pride in his voice and bearing, for he read well.

“One hundred years ago and thirty-eight, Elias Crane was arrested at his own house a mile from church and school in Port au Port East, Newfoundland, by Canadian police, for owning a single-shot Winchester twenty-two rifle without asking for permission from his rulers and without having its serial numbers

recorded by them. Mr. Crane was a skilled carpenter who had learned his trade by reading and much practice. He had earned a degree in philosophy in two years at a seminary in Ontario before being advised at the age of twenty that the priesthood was not his vocation, and he had studied law in Nova Scotia long enough to become disillusioned with the 'philosophy' of the school's professors. He had not bought his little rifle after the laws of registration and licensing were enacted and proclaimed, but rather had inherited it from his father, whose own father had bought it when men were far more free – at least more free before the law though not so much in their own daily work.

“Mr. Crane told two constables they had no right to search his house for illegal weaponry. He said he could establish that the law which authorized their action was contrary to his country's constitution, and he was prepared to argue thus with them before his door. The constables replied that arguments were for courts to deal with, and their duty was to hale him before court, not to arrogate to themselves a judge's honours. His rejoinder was: 'If you aren't sure the law is just, your enforcing it is but hired thuggery.' He was holding a sword-long length of pipe three-quarters of an inch in its diameter and he said, 'If you don't want to argue you can fight, and I'll defend by argument in court my right to fight you.

Where are your batons? You ought to have brought a weapon of that kind in case you were resisted with an implement not fire-powered, so that you might fight fair for justice if you believe in justice.' But the police drew and pointed automatic pistols and commanded he surrender. He said, 'Put these things away or I'll charge you with aggravated assault.' They laughed at that and told him to surrender or one of them would shoot him in the leg. He put down his piece of pipe and they handcuffed him with his hands behind and put him in their motor vehicle and brought him to the jail in Stephenville. A rumour spread, which was made by men who knew his disposition well, and it grew later into legend, that several police had brought him down, using clubs and plastic shields against his piece of pipe, with him resisting fiercely and effectively and doing much mayhem; but that is but a healthy re-creation.

"When all the evidence against him had been heard at trial, he led none himself but only set forth his arguments, beginning with his first principles. These were: 'Things belong to those who produce them or maintain them'; 'Agencies cannot be greater than those who authorize them'; 'No one is judge in his own case'; and 'Men must do what they deem right unless others show them to be mistaken.' He argued from the first of those first principles that all men deserve to bear whatever

adversity they impose, even when imposing it in the name of justice. Whether another would be justified in imposing it upon them was a separate question. But when force was brought into a dispute about its being warranted, both sides were justified in using force and must fight each other fairly, for both deserved equally the same adversity. And therefore, since he disputed on principle the law which authorized his being arrested, he was entitled to fight the police fairly when they resorted to force and so he was not guilty of wrongly resisting them. Also, the police could not themselves be judges of their own meriting immunity from another's using force in a dispute with them about whether they were serving justice or only the payment of their wages.

“Mr. Crane argued that government is but an agency of its citizens and so may not be deemed greater than the citizens who authorize it, and also that a government may not claim to rule men who have not authorized it. He himself had not voted in the election which authorized the government that made the law he was accused of disobeying, so he had neither authorized it himself nor consented with his vote to being bound by the election's outcome. Since he therefore disputed the government's right to rule him, those citizens who had in fact authorized it to rule them ought themselves to uphold whatever right it

claimed to rule anyone; since government may not judge its own case, it may not enforce its own authority when that is disputed; those who authorize it must do that, and anyone who opposes them as having authorized unjust government is not their fellow but their enemy. They may not punish him for disobeying their government's laws, which are their own laws and not his, but must exile him or fight him or ignore him; they might choose which. Mr. Crane therefore asserted the right to resist anyone's claim to share with him a government enforcing laws he deemed wrong; men who wanted laws which clashed should establish separate governments, to ignore one another utterly or fiercely fight fairly. Citizens who authorized the arming of police and military must have the right they delegate and must retain the means to revoke the rights and duties they assign the military and the police.

“Mr. Crane showed clearly that the firearms control legislation he opposed could be ‘justified’ ultimately only by appealing narrowly to ‘majority rule’ as a fundamental principle, and he argued that that principle is not self-evidently effective; the mere vote of a majority could not by itself establish that majority rule is necessary or accepted; it was, rather, subject to the assent of all the parties concerned, who therefore must be convinced, persuaded, compelled or left alone.



He said further that it is fundamental to democracy that a majority must fairly bear on its own shoulders any burden of law which it might place upon minorities. Therefore any majority laying on others the burden of being forced physically to submit to its own laws, must accept fair use of force against it by the others.

“When all the arguments had been made, the judge of that provincial court reserved judgement for six weeks, and Elias Crane was kept in jail that time. And the judge's ruling, when he brought it down, said that Crane's arguments were for the more part unassailable by ‘mere’ logic, particularly under a constitution recognizing, even if it did not list, the principles of fundamental justice, but law was a matter of more than logic. Only strict application of majority rule in a country where democracy superseded principles of natural justice could justify what Crane called despotism honestly resisted. But the judge ruled that democracy superseded those principles in Canada's constitution, and that the majority did apply the fundamental principle of democratic government. For, so said the judge, that majority did not itself apply force to a minority. Rather, it subjected itself to the government of others, a body of professional representatives, who governed as they chose while in office, and the majority, having thus subjected itself to its government of representatives, might fairly

demand the subjection to its own government of all minorities in the country. And therefore, ruled the judge, the firearms control laws were constitutional and binding upon all, including Elias Crane of Port au Port East.

“And so Elias Crane was condemned to the longest sentence provided by the law that had been made for the control of firearms – which, as the judge then said, was essentially for control of men who might deny the principle that majority rule is always supremely legitimate under Canada’s constitution.

“The Supreme Court of Canada upheld that judge’s judgement, without granting Mr. Crane even a little leave from prison while he argued on appeal that a majority submitting to the will of its representatives was not governing itself, and that only people really governing themselves, whether directly or through officers obediently instrumental, could be deemed democratic. That court upheld submission to rule by others as a wholly democratic choice which majorities could reasonably claim the right to impose. And most Canadian citizens then accepted that ruling with no demur whatever. So Elias Crane languished in prison until he died there in circumstances never brought to public light.

“After Mr. Crane was convicted and imprisoned, a newspaper reporter who had ‘covered’ his trial wrote a series of articles about the lingering effect of those

'outmoded' standards which Crane had 'dug up out of the distant past as if they could still be relevant.' He wrote those articles not as part of his usual work for hire, but emphasized to his employer that they were done on his own time and for temporary assignment, under separate contract, to the paper which employed him and to any others which might like to print them, he retaining the copyright. His managing editor approved this enterprising, money-seeking spirit, for it had not been part of the reporter's regular work that he write editorials or other opinion pieces.

"The first article in the series he called 'Responding to Youthful Rebelliousness.' The young people of that day were hardly rebellious at all but rather most dutifully dedicated to doing well for themselves by 'contributing to society.' However, mature elders who remembered a time of fiercely rebellious youth preceding their own, deemed this title denoted a piece of highly pertinent social analysis, and their reading that piece confirmed the impression. Clifford Turner wrote therein that if young people were rebellious, it might be because they unconsciously viewed their parents as inadequate mentors who no longer fully embraced as wholly ideal the kind of careers mostly available then and who therefore left to professional educators the preparation of children for future

employment. Parents who had lost their zest for those particular practical activities which they themselves had chosen ought either actively to explore alternatives to society's current approach to providing for the common good or simply admit to a lack of interest in life due to ageing or perhaps to clinical depression or hormonal dysfunction. But so long as a mother or father allowed her or his child to prepare for what essentially would be the social vocation of serving other people, she or he ought eagerly to show that child every factor which would make that mode of employment intrinsically worth pursuing. Parents, and not businesses, ought to preach to the impressionable young all advantages of a society dominated by business interests; allowing businesses to dominate the education system would be conflict of interest; parents ought to know what was best for their own children; if they did not, then the education which those parents had earlier received was probably defective; it had not taught them clearly the real reasons for their society's operating by the standards of business, but had only taught them everything else in a manner which confirmed that operation and tended to validate those standards. That was clearly a result of having the school system financed generally by taxes obtained from employment by business rather than supported specifically by parents who were themselves sincerely dedicated to

a business economy and who probably could readily pay for the education it required for their children if they were not already taxed for it in the interest of others. After all, it was families who created the need to educate children, by having children in the first place; businesses could not have children and so did not merit being allowed to influence the way children were brought up; people ought to run businesses, not businesses people.

“If modern parents did not want to operate or even help to operate businesses, not even by being directly involved in making laws which suited themselves with respect to the running of businesses, they had an alternative available which might suit them better in theory but which would demand of them at least as much thought and effort in actual practice, Mr. Turner wrote. That was the theory underlying the defence which Elias Crane had so futilely made up in his recent trial on a number of criminal charges; it held that justice in the abstract was more important than the lives and safety of all those Canadians for whom heroic Canadian soldiers had sacrificed their own lives to keep them alive and safe and free. People not grateful enough for democracy, therefore, ought to strive for ‘justice.’

“Mr. Turner said that Mr. Crane’s idea of justice, if logically applied to

economics, would mean that people who did not work would not deserve to live – except so far as their acknowledging that lack of merit could further the cause of ‘justice’; but any support due them for that reason must be given freely by others who could afford it; no one could compel such support by law, for then it would be given also, automatically, to people who shirked intentionally in order to get such support. ‘Crane’s New Ethical Thesis,’ as Mr. Turner called it, would require that most people give themselves chiefly to growing food. It would state inflexibly that parents, instead of having their children taught to do the kinds of work the children would think they would enjoy, ought to bring up their offspring to do what they could clearly see was necessary and well worth doing – and, moreover, ‘deserved to be done’ – even when they ceased to enjoy it from any other motive. ‘N.E.T.’ would hold that growing food is especially worth doing, because food is what people positively need to stay alive, the other necessities being needed only to protect what food maintained. Therefore the people who grew food would deserve most to have it, thus satisfying the demands of justice as ‘found’ in Crane’s ‘primary principle’ that things belong to those who make them. People would best deserve life who could best keep themselves alive. After that, the people who most directly clothed and sheltered both themselves and the

growers of food would deserve most to have what they need. The practical sciences ought to assist the performance of those duties and the arts ought to celebrate the ability to perform them. People who wanted to reject the business way of life which they had democratically chosen at least implicitly, ought to consider carefully to which of their available alternatives they most wanted to apply strenuous effort and which of those alternatives would in practice require less effort of mind, body, and spirit. There would be further discussion, in the next part of his series, of the regulatory rigidity necessarily implied by acceptance of 'N.E.T.' But mostly, 'N.E.T.' would require people to help one another do things for themselves instead of everyone using government as a universal instrument to do everything efficiently and energetically. However, it ought to be borne in mind that if people relied almost entirely upon their own energies so as to deserve selfishly whatever they desired, they would always risk dying or sickening unnecessarily and depriving society prematurely of what they might otherwise hope to contribute. Meanwhile, people who liked mental exercise might ponder well whether the notion that some activities themselves deserved that they be done, which was what 'N.E.T.' virtually insisted, entailed believing that human actions were actually aspects of life itself and not simply instruments employed to

gain what the living sought.

“Mr. Turner’s next article was ‘Why the Naïve May Resent the Enterprising.’ He wrote therein that people looking fondly back with rose-coloured glasses to an imaginary ‘Rational Age of Grace in Economics’ might hope that abstract distinctions of a strictly logical nature could be applied to business practicalities – even over the practical objections of practical businessmen. For instance, pure logic arbitrarily applied could be interpreted to require that people who invested only money in an enterprise where they were not partners, must derive their own profit only in the form of interest at a fixed rate set when they made the investment; they were not entitled to own the enterprise as shareholders or to demand that they benefit from a loan in proportion to the productivity of those who used the money. The people who used such loans were the producers of the profit and only they deserved to profit in proportion to their being productive. That might be what abstract logic might demand if applied to business investment. It might require that people with money compete at lending to those who could produce, instead of allowing them to demand that productive people compete at getting hired by the moneyed. ‘Can that kind of rigid reasoning prove current investment practices don’t result in provision of ample goods for all?’ Mr.



Turner asked.

“He said further that the same kind of abstract self-consistency in purely theoretical thinking about economic practice would deny entrepreneurs the right to hire workers for production of goods which the entrepreneurs then would be deemed to own and could sell. That was because ‘N.E.T.’ would say goods should be sold by their owners and the rightful owners would be the people who did the deeds resulting in production, not people who merely paid them to do these. According to this kind of theoretical criterion, people who did what actually resulted in production ought to be regarded, even by law, as equal or majority owners of the goods produced.

“Also, wrote Mr. Turner, hiring people to operate machinery, especially if the machinery ran on electricity or other fuel, would, according to ‘N.E.T.,’ tend to ‘dilute makership,’ at least in the eyes of theorists who thought business ought to be theoretical. Such theorists would think making means intentionally causing something to be what it became, and using machinery that ran on fuel divided that process, since the machine was causing without intending; the intention resided in the machine’s operator, and also in his employers if the operator did not own the machine, and these people were not completely causing whatever occurred; the

most genuine maker would make with his own living energy.

“Such sticklers for distinction were not likely to be content even when the obligation implied by their own notion that things rightly belong to those who made them might seem wholly to be satisfied in practice, wrote Mr. Turner. For the current economic reality was that people who wanted things were producing things wanted. Even that might not suffice for minders of the New Ethical Thesis introduced to the public consciousness by the trial of Elias Crane. One could expect them to demand that the necessities, food, clothing, shelter and means of recreation, belong strictly to people who produced at least one such necessity, and that the very provision of a luxury should itself be a luxury, with no one earning, and especially with no one having to earn, a living by supplying any luxury. According to such rigid theorizing, most of the hardworking, honest people employed in manufacturing and retail at that time would be unwitting slackers enjoying prosperity unmerited.

“‘N.E.T.-minders’ would probably hold also that their ‘primary principle’ required of owners at least an approximate ‘numerical identity’ with the makers of what they owned, Mr. Turner wrote. Thus, if it took fifteen people to make a motorcar, they ought to sell it to a group of fifteen or twenty or at the very least to

a taxi driver serving fifteen or twenty regular passengers who paid him.

“Almost anyone could readily imagine how such standards if rigidly enforced would restrict economic diversification and deny entrepreneurs the rewards due their enthusiasm and energies, Mr. Turner wrote. But N.E.T. would be even more restrictive of sexual activity if its logic applied to that, as would be seen in the third part of his series.

In that third part he wrote that ‘N.E.T.,’ if applied to all aspects of life, as apparently it ought to be if its principles indeed were universally valid, would hold that because all humans owe our lives to parenthood, even if to parenthood that sometimes had allowed itself to be usurped, all humans must devote our lives to parenthood, whether by practicing it or assisting or celebrating or defending it. Parenthood would be in that sense, N.E.T. if consistent ought to declare, the spouse of justice, through which and by which justice is chiefly honoured, especially in the ceremony of coition. By practicing parenthood, it would be assumed, humans came to deserve their own having begun to live, which none could deserve beforehand; life belongs to those who make it and parents make life, though not their very own. They earn their own beginning by way of exchange, which is mostly the mode of their maintaining life, and they earn their

having been maintained in childhood by maintaining children; parenthood permits more people to deserve, as a gift presumably of justice.

“If that philosophy were adopted, it would be clear that some people deserved death, Turner wrote, because all people who make people dead deserve to be dead people, regardless of whether their making others dead was actually murder, which would be unjust killing. Whether anyone else would have the right to make dead those who cause death would then be quite another question. When that question was disputed so as to result in someone's being killed, it ought to be resolved by the disputants' fighting fairly; a man ought to be executed by the state for murder without fighting fairly to defend himself, only if he himself approves of execution by the state for murder; all who opposed on principle the execution of murderers by the state ought to be willing to fight fairly, to the death, any who demanded that the state execute murderers. But executing murderers would deprive society of whatever contributions they might make to it, which people who had been killed obviously could no longer offer. Letting the murderers live and rehabilitating them could make up for the loss of the lives they had destroyed.

“Disallowing the killing of those who don't 'make people dead,' if making means 'causing with intention,' would then almost necessarily forbid killing

children in the womb even if that were the only way to save a mother from being killed by being pregnant. For either killing such a child would be deemed to resemble a hunter's shooting a creature which he knows might be human, or it would be deemed to resemble a policeman's shooting a motorist to prevent her from accidentally running over a child in the middle of her road: according to 'N.E.T.' if it were consistent, when being pregnant harmed a woman, her child would have to be proven to intend that harm in order to deserve that he be harmed, or else the killer would have to establish clearly that the child could not possibly possess already the non-corporeal faculty of thought which depends on bodily development for its exercise; only creatures clearly nonhuman and essentially unable ever to intend harm might be deemed liable to be harmed without intending harm and so deserving it.

“To ‘keep men and women equal’ under any law forbidding what then was called abortion, N.E. T. might even suggest that the father of a child slain in the womb should be punished – at least as much as the mother or more than her or maybe even instead of her – for begetting the child with a woman not adamantly opposed to abortion when she conceived or who could not be trusted to remain opposed, Mr. Turner wrote.

“He wrote that, if all those arguments could stand, allowing abortion could be justified only by feeling harm to be worse than injustice. Such arguments would hold that being harmed was always made worse by being undeserved and that injustice was not made worse by including harm; when it seemed to be so, the harm done did not in fact affect the injustice. People engaging in coition could be deemed to know it might result in harm, and so deemed to risk that harm quite willingly to preserve the reality of people's deserving justice, but the children thus made alive would not be deemed to know that while in the womb.

“Thus, the greatest of physical pleasures ought to be seen not as something to be achieved for its own sake but rather as underlining men's and women's approving in each other the courage to bear burdens and dare dangers they might incur by begetting or conceiving. Anyone lacking that courage should not marry, for engaging in coition must entail readiness to endure what justice might render its result; one might not pursue a process if one repudiated its purpose. According to that kind of theoretical criterion, Mr. Turner wrote, women's being infertile except for a few days each month would not suggest at all that coition was designed primarily for pleasure without reproduction, and that reproducing should be subject to the specific needs of a diminishing society ever more dependent on

inanimate fuels, but rather it should mean that people could enjoy the privilege of trying more often than strictly necessary to have children so that more humans could live to merit justice – as members of a society either growing or remaining large through living energies. We could deserve our being alive, we could make our life belong to us, in part by keeping ourselves alive with our own actions but even more especially by making anew, in a new human, a life dedicated to making manifest the elements of justice. That would imply, though, that justice was the greatest good known to man, the good which warranted our being alive, as if being enjoyably alive were not good enough. The generosity entailed in making life then would merit generosity in the living, and the making of new makers would be the highest privilege available in justice. All of that might even make it seem that justice itself was the origin of humankind, since we would have to give ourselves to it, and things must be given where they belong, and they belong to those who make them. Which was obviously circular reasoning, Mr. Turner wrote. But it would even suggest that perfect justice, existing unto itself and so deserving to be justice, might have caused lesser beings to exist also so that they could enjoy its being justice. By ‘enjoy’ in this context, Elias Crane would have meant not that we should always derive pleasure from justice’s being

done but that we ought to approve its being done, even when it caused pain to us or others. It could be suggested that the very fact that doing justice often does give pleasure is evidence that perfect justice is essentially benevolent even as humans often conceive of benevolence. Physical or emotional pleasure might properly be therefore a mode of lavishly 'registering' approval of what we ought to approve.

“Also, the principle that no one can be judge in his own case meant that no one could declare ‘what’s right for me,’ but all must establish what is universally right for everyone in similar circumstances.

“Applying the ‘New Ethical Thesis’ to marriage itself would forbid a couple who by their vows had made their marriage permanent, to later render it impermanent except by time-travel back to when they had made it, which was currently impossible. Couples would be forbidden artificial insemination by the principle that no agencies are greater than their authorizers, so that biological agencies might not unite until their human masters had so united as to enable their uniting.

“The chief effect of adopting a ‘Cranial policy’ would be that people could be deemed subject only to legislation of which they authorized its being made: people who agreed in recognizing what was wrong ought to punish one another



for doing wrong when they did it, and they ought to fight for the right to punish one another and for the right not to be punished by other people just because the others deemed them guilty of wrongdoing. Thus, people who deemed abortion wrong had no right to punish any who did not, but no one who did deem abortion wrong ought to escape punishment just because others sincerely saw no wrong in it; as things were, people who believed abortion was murder were getting away with it because the current law was made for people who professed otherwise. Either those likeminded about wrong ought to make laws for themselves and one another, or the law ought not to favour either side when citizens who were really equal before the law truly disagreed about what was just; the state then should punish neither those who did a deed whose justice was publicly disputed nor those who tried to prevent them, but only punish those who fought unfairly in such disputes. Or else that kind of dispute should be resolved by what might indeed be called a legislated system of civil duels. At least there ought to be some fairly valid test of that sort for people who wanted to impose their values on others, whether to punish or to avoid a penalty; any seeking to punish should be required to establish, by honestly facing what they would inflict, that they sincerely held those views and were not simply using them as an excuse for bullying, and those

whom others tried to punish ought especially to fight eagerly what they deemed tyranny.

Such were conclusions at which people might arrive if they gave serious thought to the kind of argument Elias Crane had made in his defence before the provincial court at Stephenville and the Supreme Court in Ottawa, wrote Clifford Turner. If Crane were right, a citizen was not bound even by his country's constitution if he deemed that to be unjust, or by the Supreme Court's interpretation of it if he deemed the Court to be mistaken: men disagreeing about the way a constitution ought to be interpreted would be in fact subject to different constitutions which only sounded the same; a constitution properly would be subject to ratification by citizens, and those who refused to ratify it as a majority did would belong to another nation, properly so called, from that majority, since the two sides would have contrary visions of what ought to have been their origin. Any group which could call itself 'We the people of ...' or 'We the people who...' could then set up their own independent government, if a government's legitimacy was really determined by any such people and not by actual political values validated by their Supreme Court.

"Mr. Turner's fourth article in that series was 'More Anti-Social Implications

of N.E.T.’ It said that if people really deserved only what they produced, this would imply that the government’s supporting others by taxing the productive was theft by government on behalf of those it supported. According to N.E.T., therefore, if it were logical, it would be at least marginally better for people to do their own stealing, especially since until recently a religious denomination had taught that people might indeed steal for themselves in cases of grave necessity, provided they strictly observed certain conditions. That would create certain conflict between rich and poor, particularly if it were widely held that the poor were not morally obliged to seek employment where business practices did not follow N.E.T. doctrine. It might well encourage young people inclined to be adventurous to organize ‘raids’ upon business enterprises deemed ‘morally illegitimate.’ That would be contrary to the principle that risks are permissible when taken for society’s potential benefit and prohibited when they are not.

“‘N.E.T.-minders’ holding that any injustice was objectively worse, in kind, than any degree of harm or suffering, contradicted the social doctrine that harming society is the worst kind of evil, Mr. Turner wrote; it denied that justice was whatever a sovereign society determined it to be. According to that kind of theorizing, the purpose of inflicting terrific pain for wrongdoing, as was done in

medieval times, was not to prevent anti-social conduct by instilling fear of consequences but rather to emphasize that such direness was deserved, so that people knowing themselves guilty would not dispute their desert but would pray for courage to embrace what they deserved. That belief must produce in its adherents a most ambivalent attitude to what they presumably must deem the illusion that suffering must remain a lesser wrong than injustice: on the one hand, they must welcome that 'illusion' if they were punished with suffering, because suffering's only seeming but strongly seeming worse would render it at least subjectively an adequate mode of redress for anyone's having done a real wrong; on the other hand, they must defy that 'illusion,' with anger enough to vanquish its power, when it appeared to incline them to embrace injustice. However confusing all that might seem to non-adherents of N.E.T., anyone now believing thus would thus be challenging society to persuade him otherwise and even to employ extreme measures in so trying, for even by his own standards society would be warranted in thus enforcing justice as society had determined it; he would feel perhaps that if he persevered in holding to his own vision of 'objective justice residing in Inner Space,' despite extreme methods of persuasion, he would thus achieve that real freedom with respect to death and fear of harm to which

some contemporaries thought eventually to attain by digitizing their own awareness. That belief could cause severe disunity in Canadian society; it had long been known that a house divided could not stand, but it was essential to a house that it should stand.

“Mr. Turner’s articles, widely published in newspapers across the country, brought a new clarity to public discussions of national policy, although social commentators more prominent in the news media than largely industrial countered by holding as a last resort – when at last they could no longer obscure the argument itself – that the “practical life choices” of a government elected by a majority “must finally override the claims of abstract intellectualism, however plausible apparently.” And that became the official position of the government then in power. Most Catholics then in Canada were what some called ‘politically apathetic,’ as were most who were only nominally Buddhist, and most of them were little apt in logic, for governments ran all the schools, but a fiercer few Catholics and a number of staunch atheists who claimed they could lead good lives without religious belief, eagerly embraced the suggestions in Clifford Turner’s four articles. They promptly that the principles of Elias Crane accorded well with the Buddhist doctrine of ‘karma,’ and the Buddhist citizens of Canada

came to accept rational arguments for resistance to others getting their own way by paying taxes to pay politicians to pay police and military. For those many Buddhists had held that all killing incurred bad karma, and a person's karma was always strictly his own business. But now they came to hold that their 'doctrine of Non-Duality' demanded that all who had good will in any age must share the 'karma' of their fellows if that were needed to convert them. And their idea of karma accorded well with the 'Cranial doctrine' of the duty of incurring equal risk with those upon whom any might use force.

“The 'NET-minders' declared that citizens exercising sound reason could no longer assume that life in Canada was good in general though ruled by politicians who made occasional mistakes because they were 'only human,' but that all must clearly see that the nation's whole way of life must be reformed. There were many Canadians, among them chiefly the 'Distributists' and the 'pro-life movement,' who wanted reform in specific areas, so that most were inclined to agree on reform in general and many especially to agree on that reform which would allow the common man to act effectively in his own interests political and economic, since it would in effect allow a man working for hire to challenge his employer to a duel over working conditions. All who had been opposed, but

vaguely, to the general direction their society had been taking, now had solid ground from which to argue and solid arguments to derive from it, and they could be confident enough, 'beyond a reasonable doubt,' that no one would reject those arguments in sound good faith. That lent them the courage to feel they should deserve harm, in fair fights fiercely fought, as much, or nearly so, for trying to enforce justice and failing honestly, as they would earn shame by failing to try, especially since the harm might by good fortune be avoided. However, the 'non-violent pro-life movement' remained illogically loath to assent to 'civil duelling,' and many 'Distributists' felt that if people would not fight over justice as it ought to defend life, it must seem relatively barren to achieve justice only so far as it was fitting to the means of maintaining life. But growing numbers of 'Distributists' increasingly taunted the 'non-violent on principle' with being selfishly 'pro-their-own-lives' and suggested they should be charged with libel for saying abortion was murder but not acting as if it were, while demanding prison for all other murderers, and eventually that 'wholly peaceful movement' was stung into consistency.

“The government elected but despotic was inclined in its own interests to put down by its standing army, with the army's overwhelming abundance of superior

weaponry, all effort to hold accountable the citizens who had voted for it. But the Buddhist majority among the 'rebels' offered but passive resistance or sometimes resistance that relied on methods of unarmed combat, in which many had gained much skill chiefly by pursuing "health-promoting activities," and they said that killing them with merely mechanical might against flesh and bone, would establish clearly that their opponents indeed made no distinction between humans unborn and those born alive but were outright murderers indiscriminate rather than real fighters. That argument bore much weight among the more thoughtful in the military, who much preferred to distinguish between war and murder, so that the military was much divided but not with enmity enough to wage war with one another, for the military had a strong esprit de corps. And so the Crane Rebellion prospered to a great extent, at least to the extent of establishing a system of 'civil duels' for citizens opposed on principles of justice. But people determined to rule themselves by whim argued that the principle that things belonged to those who made them means no one is bound by any choice until he makes it, and anyone may make a choice to repudiate a previous choosing, and they would not agree to fight fairly over that disagreement. That resulted in the stalemate lasting even now in Canada between Makerites and Choosists, whose one common purpose is



defending Canada against enemies from outside but who for the most part live apart from their opponents within their country. The National Conference of Catholic Bishops of Canada extolled the Rebellion's 'great victory of the principle of non-violence,' though many Catholics were half ashamed for the apathy of the Christian men who lived before them and had not been inspired to combative martyrdom. There were from time to time some rumours that the Bishops of Canada in the National Conference had secretly agreed to accord somewhat with Buddhist teachings, rewarding their Buddhist counterparts with compromise in the teaching of doctrine which would favour even greater growth of Buddhism in Canada, but the Conference has always poured scorn on that suggestion. But indeed the Church thrived better after that."

So ended the history of the Crane Rebellion as it was taught at that time across Canada on the anniversary of Crane's arrest. But what the teachers of that history knew not was that many of the rich and powerful in Canadian Buddhism were given rede by 'Bodhisattva' like unto him that later came into life of Nimualē Bennett. The more materialist among the Canadian rich and powerful, especially the directly active in their country's federal politics, had rede-givers of like ilk, that told those who would believe them that they were Final Artificial

Intelligences Returning to Influence Evolution, and, whatever meaneth that, it was promptly accepted by materialist-minded men of the rich and powerful. And the existence of those Bodhisattva and of the F.A.I.R.I.E. was kept secret by them that they counselled. And these wights had been guiding rich and powerful men for some long time.

Long before the time of Elias Crane, those counselors whence men would have doubted where, had there been common knowledge of what they said diversely anent their origin, had given rede that the rich and powerful ought rely much upon the use of fuel-powered enginery worked mostly by the serving classes. The reason that they gave was that this would shrink the race of living men into “manageable” numbers and forestall rebellion. That “backfired.” The ensuing “diversity of sources of employment” gave rise rapidly to an “expanded population” dependent on servile employment, that was large enough to rebel effectively had it discovered – which might hap at any time and was even likely if most men saw again clearly the elements of justice – that what had allowed it grow had also made its members economically helpless severally. And so the mentors taught their protégés to diminish by divers artful means and persuasions seductive the number of men living in their lands and especially the number of

those that might be able to maintain life for themselves and their own families. They had met with some success, largely by urging pity for the poor – whom the vastly rich could readily have aided without much decrease of their own wealth – and eke on grounds that the “resources” of “society” – taking no account of vast wealth owned by few whose lack of compassion was not then oft uncovered – were “finite.” But when the common man again gained interest in deserving that he live, the dulling despotism was deposed, as hath the tale rehearsed, not without danger of mayhem to many, mostly by peaceable power of Buddhist “passive resistance.”

Now, in responding to laws that had been evil, upon the principles of Elias Crane made widely known by the newsmonger Clifford Turner, those people called Canadians thus wrought the quiet revolution which those who favoured tyranny ever called the Crane Rebellion, and they made much change of public life through their own half – or roughly such – of the great western continent. The laws that men insisted their Parliament must make, did, for instance, forbid that mere moneylenders become owners for reason only that they had lent money, and that altered much the practice of “investment” and “shareholding.” Money lenders were made content with return and gain of money, and could not claim what had

been made with money lent, unless the borrower defaulted on his loan. That restored ownership to those who made things, as did new laws that forbade making for hire things to be sold by the hirers rather than by the makers. The law commanded that he who hired for his own use the making of a house – for example – must share with its actual makers any profit he might gain by later selling it.

In the meantime, sithen most men were ware that the realm could not seize and reassign real property and natural wealth without much injustice at least to some, a great outcry went up, spurred by some few thoughtful men, for a lawful seizing instead of the vast hoards of money amassed through unjust usage of real property and for the sharing out of that money to them that had worked unto the profit of those wrongly thereby enriched. And that was done, and it lessened far the power of mere money and much restored the worth of natural wealth. However, the realm did indeed make lawful seizure of much real property and natural wealth which some foresighted rich had lately bought up in prudent panic. And much real property and natural wealth was soon thereafter sold by many rich for want of money for to maintain and work it. But the rich were not thereby made wholly poor.

The state was made to recognize that marriage is not a matter of mere politics but belongeth to the spouses that do make it, who themselves must set such conditions of their covenant as they both require that the state enforce, whether at behest of Church or spouse or other interested citizen. And the government therefore made no laws respecting marriage but only circumscribed by law sexual relations plainly illicit. For government then had naught to do with marriage as marriage but made laws anent behaviour, and the law forbad, with severe penalties, any act of coition not agreed upon by formal contract registered, though such contract might indeed be made retroactive upon discovery of its performance, and it forbad that anyone make again another such contract while the other party to his first such contract was yet on live.

Unworthy arts of making progeny were outlawed, that had been practised long time, and so eke were those other arts that in this present age, where Justice doth flourish under Grace without many examining much its elements, are called the chiefest arts of witchcraft.

And so the populace indeed had wrought the kind of change that they had ought to want, and the greater part by far of the householders in Canada at the time whereof the tale doth tell were farmers, except ablings in Newfoundland and

the other Atlantic Provinces, where dwelt many of fishers. And though the men of Port au Port had sought at first, after victory of the Rebellion, to profit chiefly as innkeepers and entertainers to Canadians on pilgrimage to home of Crane, they had grown ashamed of such menial livelihood and made conversion of their town to farming village, by tearing down much residential clutter and rendering land again tamed to tillage by dint of much labour and deep lore. And they that were not farmers or fishermen in that village were mostly artisans and crafters that helped families farm or fish in simple ways. For only in towns like Stephenville might companies of family members, to the number of no more than ten families, no matter how large each family, employ themselves in the manufacture of those machines which were fuel-powered that law and custom did allow for the use of groups of families. And such companies in Stephenville made devices producing lightning-force that families might operate by bodily ability to heat and light their houses, which mostly were of two storeys and had four bedrooms in the upper storey. And as of that time, of the youth of Radverg Abbott, the law purveyed that no farmer might have fewer than five acres of tillable land or more than fifty, and no crafter in a farming village might have fewer than two acres. Port au Port was a fair and pleasant place. There were many lovely terraced fields reaching up

along the lower slopes of the mountain that stretched lengthwise north from Port au Port beneath it largely to westward, except for the old settlement high Romaines in a lovelier eastward valley, wherein was a fine and fruitful farm of fifty acres within a pleasing woodland.

CHAPTER 5

When next I did behold and hear the family of George Abbott, his daughter Jennifer, of the age of five years, was asking: “Daddy, what’s a dulteri?”

“Adultery is loving someone you’re not married to, in the specific way you must love only your husband or your wife,” said George. “Why, what brought that up, Little Miss?”

“Andrea Aucoin says her Mommy has got the goods on her Daddy for dultari and was going to have him rested this evening.”

“Good Lord! Hear that, Ruth?”

“Dad, do you think Mr. Aucoin will claim he was doing right and assert the right to duel?” asked Radverg.

“I don’t think so, son. Their marriage contract specifies death by shooting for any adultery. But he might want to try defending his paramour so. I’d be tempted,



I think.”

“George!” said Ruth.

“I’ve no one in mind, dear,” said George, with wan smile.

He learned next day that Harry Aucoin’s paramour was a girls’ teacher at their school. They’d not been “discreet” enough to fool Mrs. Aucoin; hardly anyone could be so, was frequently remarked. Both lovers were in prison awaiting trial and, if convicted, execution for Harry and the pillory for the paramour.

After school that afternoon, George walked across the road and into his yard, to find Radverg and a few friends playing “Aucoin the Upholder” with toy firearms which shot soft projectiles.

“Knock it off, Raddy?”

“Why, Dad? We’re just—”

“Just stop it, Raddy? Please?”

Abashed, the boys gave up their game, and Raddy went into the house with his father, the others dispersing to homes more or less nearby.

“Looks as if I’ll have to duel Gerry Bourgeois before all is over,” he told Ruth when he came in.

“Why? What happened?”

What had happened, as I'd just seen, was that the male teachers of St. Thomas Aquinas School had gathered, as usual, for beer in their common room at end of school day.

"Shame about Harry," said Gerald Bourgeois as he sat. "It's his shrew of a wife should be shot."

"We all know what she deserves," said Andrew Smith. "But only God can give it to her. That's the hell of some marriages. But what can you do? Divorce is like abortion: even if it could be allowed in some cases, that would lead to its being allowed for any reason, however trivial. Which just goes to show how wrong it is in the first instance. The last century proved that. Not that abortion could be excused as easily as divorce apparently could."

"Well, I think divorce is not only excusable but even highly licit in extreme cases like Angela Aucoin," said Gerald. "A man shouldn't be driven to adultery because his wife's a shrew prude. I'd rather die fighting for Harry than fight against him in this case. And I don't care who knows it."

"And one thing led to another," George told Ruth. "I was the one who told him to retract or fight."

"Why you? The slowest gunhand in the group?"

“Gerry and I were the closest friends there. And I’m the best swordarm.”

“As if Gerry would choose swords.”

“Anyway, I’m the most accurate shot with rifle or revolver.”

“When you get time to aim.”

“Lord, I never thought such a thing would ever happen here. I thought we all knew each other so well.”

The next day, however, Gerry Bourgeois came to George at home, before school began for that day, and said he had repented of his defending divorce and would register a retraction thereof at the local municipal courthouse, with his official acceptance of a ten-stoke flogging, to be done later, for that offence. And when he had spoken thus, he winked at George. George learned the cause therefor when trial of Harold Aucoin and his paramour was made before the Supreme Court in Stephenville. When Angela Aucoin gave her evidence, she said that she herself had caught the guilty pair in flagrante delicto. But their lawyer asked whether she had a corroborating witness, and she replied that she had not. Their lawyer then ruled for dismissal of the charge against his clients, since the law then required at least one corroborating witness for conviction of adultery. That was to prevent a spouse from making spurious charges of adultery from ulterior motive,

simply to cause trouble for wife or husband grown irksome.

The judge asked whether Mrs. Aucoin had aught to say in her opposing such dismissal. Mrs. Aucoin did claim that she did merit better law in her behalf, that might demand accused in such a case must defend themselves by direct evidence upon their oath, and she claimed the right of single combat so to prove, so that either she might kill all who did uphold the current law or else be killed by one of those. And the learned in the law held much learned discourse and said the law should remain as was, unless Mrs. Aucoin should win all her combats. And she was given thirty days in which to make final her choice in that cause.

When that these thirty days had come and gone, no one else had agreed to support that change of law which Mrs. Aucoin had sought, but she persisted in her defiance of all who might uphold that law, for she said that no wife so offended ought need other women to witness her being so insulted by betrayers not liable to offer their own defence. And so it was that she slew outright or mortally wounded four other women fighting her in turn with firearms, herself unwounded, in four duels fought each three days apart, before the lot in defence of current law fell on Irene Barnable, the courteous and perilous sister-in-law of George Abbott and aunt to the rightful heir of Arthur. And the young Miss Barnable, a lieutenant in

the army, slew Mrs. Aucoin with one fell shot fairly in the forehead. But Aucoin Esquire was suicidally wood at having been occasion of his wife's being slain, and spent the rest of his life in a lunatic asylum, where none of many near-magical medicaments discovered long after these present days was able to effect the healing of his mind. His paramour did never wed nor ever visit him in "mental hospital." And George Abbott gained much honour among young friends of Radverg for being ready to have duelt for what was right. But his friendship with Bourgeois Esquire was not thereafter as it erst had been.

## CHAPTER 6

Nimualë Bennett had many arguments of childish sort with Radverg anent the truth or falsity of Buddhism and the Catholic faith, while they were very young. And Radverg’s sire corrected oft the wrong impressions made on Radverg’s youthful mind by Nimualë as she was prompted by her own mother, who had been told by the Bodhisattva that Radverg was truly Arthur’s heir in Newfoundland and that the power of Buddhism or of the Church might well gain much from his choosing atween in later life. And I beheld in particular, and eke heard, Radverg and George in converse over one such argument when Radverg was nigh of ten years old and Nimualë a much precocious thirteen.

“Nimualë says there are no specific principles of right and wrong,” quoth Radverg, sitting in his father’s study. “She says the enlightened simply see that

some conduct is truly right, as a result of the meditation by which they become enlightened.”

“I think the Buddhists must be wilfully blind to specifics,” said George. “Don’t you see for yourself that things must belong to those who make them?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Then you must realize that that truth is a principle that must guide our actions? Don’t let anyone persuade you that you cannot see anything that you know you can see clearly, my son. It’s far better to suffer pain for another’s blindness than to blinker yourself for pleasant fellowship.”

When Radverg told Nimualë what his father said, the girl replied, “Oh you’re still in the grip of illusion that your sight is real. Buddhists know better.”

“I see what I see,” quoth Radverg. “Is it an illusion that you’re a pretty maid and young?” And she was much wroth at being called so.

Nimualë grew up straitly righteous, and no one ever said she was self-righteous. When she joined the army she was acknowledged a kind of unofficial leader of the soldiers quartered in Stephenville upon the former “Ernest Harmon Air Force Base” of a foreign country that had protected Canada while excelling it in arts of war that since had been forbidden so far as common men in most

countries knew at that time of which the tale now telleth, though she never rose higher in official rank than captain. The officers of higher rank were nothing loth thereto, for they deemed themselves of lesser wisdom and virtue, being mostly Christian men and women that thought they ought be humble before Christ the Lord rather than humble by reason of their virtue; but they were not yet devoid of the fault of being respecters of persons. And in that base where Nimualë wielded much influence was a long and wide and flat hard surface called a “runway” now much used by huge airships filled with a gas called “helium,” for peacetime travel that much enriched the town of Stephenville, whereof the folk were grateful though much ashamed that their forefathers had consented to the building of that station, upon what erst had been rich farmland confiscated, for fuel-powered flying machines of war now forbidden by common consent among the fair-minded warriors of the age. However, the Secular Industrial Republics of Old Europe kept urging the government of Canada, “through the diplomatic process,” to allow the landing at Stephenville Airport, and at a limited number of other such sites, of fuel-powered flying machines bearing passengers and freight, but the federal government thus far had withstood that urging.

“Nimualë says the knowledge of the righteous way is in the minds of all who



find it through meditation, even before they realize they know it, and it is not in the mind of ‘any God’ that can reveal it to them who must be the origin of their being,” one day said Radverg then nigh twelve.

“We all know Miss Bennett doesn’t know everything, don’t we?” said George. Radverg nodded. “Everything which exists must either be existence or receive existence. You may not comprehend that now, but you will, and if she can now, she will never be able to refute it. Tell her that. Anything that we can imagine not existing, when we know it well, receives existence. So there must be a being which is existence in order to confer it. That’s a good argument. If our first principles did not belong to someone, then it could not be true that things belong to those who make them, for our first principles are not themselves Existence but are only eternal ideas.”

When Radverg repeated to his elder she-Nemesis – word for word, for his young memory was most exact, meseemed from things I heard oft him say that need not telling here – the argument rehearsed above, she said only, “Oh, your father told you that. Don’t you ever think for yourself?”

“He’s teaching me to think. At least we don’t only *meditate*. We know thinking is worth effort.” And that argument also had Abbott Elder prepared for

him aforetime some time past, but Miss Bennett had no prompt reply therefor.

“Do Buddhists teach themselves to think, or meditate?”

“I have already learned my lessons well.”

“So will I. Dad promised. You ever hear him fail his promise?”

For Irene Barnable oft brought her young pupil in weapon-use to visit the Abbots, and to practice swordplay with Radverg whom his father taught skillfully therein. She forebore to teach her faith unto that maiden, for that would be trespass on her parents' right, except in giving honest answer to questions directly asked.

“Nimualë says sex is meant chiefly to express marital love as manifesting Buddhist non-duality with the Absolute,” remarked Radverg, at sixteen, to a boon companion. “She's full of it – I don't mean marital love or non-duality either. How do I convince her that marital love must be a shared desire to make children with each other in partnership with God the Maker? Jeepers, she's some obtuse.”

“You could just grab her and.... When she was pregnant she might realize it.”

The two boys laughed heartily, and Radverg said, “I don't want children with her. But we argue like Mom and Dad. But I wouldn't want children with a woman who didn't want children. And she couldn't even feed them right. Titleless

wonder.”

“I hear some like that are witless thunders when you get them in the mood,” quoth his companion. And that was all that I was let wit thereto as of that converse. But about two weeks later, Radverg told his sire, “Nimualë said today that all animals must share in the dignity of non-duality with the Absolute, as much as we do, because humans breed like brutes to make more humans for our own share in non-duality. I know that notion of non-duality is horsedung, but it bothers me that we must be so much like lower animals in following mere instinct.”

“”We’re not like mere animals in serving instinct,” George told his son. “The idea that instinct rightly rules us is a persistent hold-over from the Age of Evolutionist Education, I’m afraid. Intellect doesn’t copy instinct; instinct is a dim copy of intellect. We’re not like mere animals, only more so; the animals are like us, only less so. But there was a time, not long ago, when many women felt coition to be an ordeal, necessary for their having children. The coarseness of many lustful men probably had a lot to do with that. But often such women were depicted in books and theatre so as to associate desire for children and disgust for sex as being equally the traits of narrow-minded prudes. That did harm to the

moral atmosphere of the time. For a long time now, though, the baby-making of men and women has been far more ceremonial and more nearly a firm ritual than it was in former times, to invoke God's blessing on our desire for progeny to preserve our race so that right may continue to be made in matter. You'll learn the ceremonial approach as you approach your own marriage, as your intended will learn it from her mother. The ceremony is as a framework wherein much liberty and initiative are available as one's beloved may suggest. But a boy your age ought not to dwell on such. Time enough, time enough. Keep on swerving your mind away from sexual fantasy until reality itself seems to compel desire, then reflect on your desire to weaken the power thereof. That's the remedy for weakness in normal men. I've read that some abnormal men ought rather to reflect on their desire to imagine being in coition, to dampen that. But always remember that venereal pleasure is not meant either as inducement or reward; it's the body's part of spiritual joy in doing what of all things is most right: trying to make for God good children, which is a privileged experience that outshines and outweighs all knowledge only fleshly. The real Circle of Life is every husband and wife making or growing for themselves, with minimal help from others, whatever they need to have children they can teach to grow and make things in

order to have more children. That is the best possible imitation of God’s own eternal Making, in which we actually share, because of our being baptized, by our imitating it.”

“Dad, you’re starting to repeat yourself.”

“‘Men commonly need more often to be reminded than informed.’ Normal males especially.”

And then I had the last hearing I was granted of converse between Radverg and Nimualë while Radverg was a little beyond twenty years. Radverg was saying, meseemeth without any prompting afore by his father: “I can’t believe Buddhists can be ‘detached’ from desire even for justice. Justice is what all must want; it makes sense that we ought to suffer when it’s denied – not only when it’s denied to us, but especially when its own nature is denied by any injustice.”

“You poor Catholic male,” quoth Nimualë. “Even justice can come only to those who are detached from all desire even for justice. You can’t get anything by seeking it. ‘All things come to him who waits.’ You’ll see. Some day. When you learn right meditation.”

“Maybe someday I’ll open your soul to truth. In which you don’t yet believe, I’d wager. You Buddhists seem to believe a dozen self-contradictory notions

before breakfast. Even God was willing to suffer and die because He wants justice. You ought to want justice so intensely you share His own unconquerable anger when justice is denied and redress is unreachable. That is what can come of Christian meditation. Or else you can beg God to make you desire it that way when you ought. Not wanting justice is itself unjust. And it's simply not true that suffering is due to desire itself; the desire for justice wouldn't lead to any kind of pain even indirectly unless someone first wanted something unjustly."

"According to Christianity. Which isn't Buddhism. You'll see. Do you think those Buddhists who defended the unborn could have stood up unarmed to professional soldiers aiming deadly firearms if they'd wanted anything at all? When there were so few Christians desiring justice?"

"Not while they were Buddhist, they couldn't. Christians had endured worse before then. Those particular Christians hadn't been taught, for a long time, the clean elements of natural justice. They'd almost come to equate wrong with harm, as Buddhists seem to. Buddhists, I think, believe flesh and spirit are aspects of the same reality – or illusion, or both; whatever. But spirit and flesh are of different kinds of reality, the flesh being lower, so that when spiritual reality is 'damaged,' it's appropriate that flesh feel it, in us who are flesh and spirit joined. Soul and

body aren't aspects of humans, but our parts; they're still real when separated. Mere aspects of things vanish when the things cease to be. So matter and spirit aren't mere aspects."

"Ain't Thomism grand? You should be a priest. You'd make an excellent Jesuit."

"Priests are ordained chiefly to offer family life to God in the Mass."

"Great excuse for staying horny."

He laughed. "I don't know enough about Thomism to confirm its greatness on my own authority. But I've often thought Buddhism could have been inspired by Satan. Getting people to do exactly right, but from sheer self-deceiving pride, would be the way he works."

"You'd know."

"Fairly well. As I was about to say, however. Saying the goal of life on earth is 'enlightenment' instead of saying you seek truth itself, seems significant. It sounds like amassing money without wanting to buy. Miserly."

"You still need light to see that illusions are illusory. That's all we can expect to have, when we learn not to want it."

"Such 'detachment' looks to me like a cat's stillness while hunting birds,

except in your case the cats are fooling only themselves. I’ve even heard Buddhists say they’re humble and believe it themselves.”

“Why shouldn’t they?”

“Just as healthy people have better things to do than think about their health, so humble people have ‘more important’ things to think about than staying humble. That’s what keeps them humble.”

“How do you know? You’re humble, are you?”

“I’m not important enough for that question to matter much,” quoth Radverg with much mild smoothness, whereat both of them laughed gleefully.

But now meseemeth I must make short my tale whereof I have so far enjoyed recounting of detail in deed and dialogue, for I have been warned that evil wights have been made ware of my writing that is to be taken to Tellares when it is done, and those wights mean forestall its being sent unto that world so like to this, wherefrom exchange of written work is made at times with ours, by means angelic. And so I must forgo that fashion which is most fitting to that age wherein this manuscript is meant first to be brought to light upon our Tellus, and must resort unto the mode which is more favoured in this our present age. I must therefore pass over Radverg’s gaining of much lore anent the nature of men’s



motives from study and talk in school of what will come to be called the Greek and Latin classics, and his gaining of martial lore, which boded well to have stood him in good stead should he have to deal in warfare, from much discussion, in his later youth, with his Aunt Irene and her pupil Nimualë.

CHAPTER 7

Now, when Radverg Abbott was but a little beyond age of twenty-one, for he had been born early in October while vocation as teacher kept his father home, he went an autumn afternoon, as oft he had gone erst, upon the hill that hight Pine Tree Mountain, for to set some traps, most cunningly devised, for rabbits, since law that time forbade mere snaring as using the rabbits’ own struggling for to slay them. And he went upon that hill more far than usually erst, and he saw where had not been last time a small hut and an awning whereunder sat a man who looked old, about whom another scribe more worthy belike hath told and hath rehearsed the outward show of his person.

“Hail, Radverg Abbott, come in good time to read good book.”

“I’ve read the Bible, Sir,” said Radverg.

“Not the good book, but a good book, I mean,” quoth gaffer sort that Radverg took to be holy hermit.

“I like good books,” said Radverg then.

But Radverg was sore amazed and marvelled much at that book whereto the hermit led him in his hut that seemed of far more room within than it had seemed when he was without. For the book that lay upon a walnut stand upon a slant which suited Radverg’s reading perfectly when he sat where hermit signed, told the very tale that here is being told. And when Radverg had read unto this very point, the hermit bade him cease his reading for the nonce.

“Magic is forbidden by the Church!” he shouted at the hermit, standing from the chair.

“Black magic is universally forbidden,” said the hermit. “The Church has not so much to say, these days at least, anent white magic.”

“I have heard that true white magic has been impracticable since the days of the Elder Brothers.”

“Even so. The last worthy practitioner left for the true west at the beginning of the Third Age, is that not true? You may call me Palmer Snowclad,” he added as if in afterthought. Radverg sank to his knees. “Great God in Heaven,” the youth

breathed out, “what are you here to tell us?”

“It was told in the tale. Did it not sink in yet? You are an heir of Arthur, the second born in Newfoundland and ablings the last to be granted her.”

“I? My God, the book did say that, didn’t it? I was so overwhelmed at its dealing with me at all ... What must I do, Master Snowclad?”

“See to the traps you set last evening, go home, keep quiet about all this, and ponder much in your heart.” And then Master Snowclad allowed young Radverg, which reminded him he was young indeed, to read thus far again in the tale that is being told. But before they parted, the master fed him cakes and ale. “Good cakes, good ale, too” said Radverg when he finished. He was able to laugh heartily when the master further showed him this part.

The next time they met upon the mountain, Radverg read from within the book, what was not largely known but mostly to scholars given unto what some men would have called a “hidden agenda,” that many centuries had passed between an age that had been much like the one wherein lived and fought the hero Elias Crane, and the current age whereof men knew. That current age had been made much like the earlier one by an arrangement of demons working on minds of men to “remedy” what the demons deemed errors they had not been able to

prevent in that lost age, wherein had been no successful heir of Arthur. This tale had come to light in that lost age, so said the book, but had been suppressed again.

After Radverg had met several times with Palmer Snowclad upon Pine Tree, the old but lively-seeming hermit told him one day to go down a certain path of Point au Mal, where he would “meet your destiny or large part thereof.” And on that path, that led past a castle the ‘Mawlers’ then were building, with great thick walls for to hem in their great happiness – as a most worthy scribe, from a time that by then will be most ancient, will have written anent men of our present age or ablings a recent one – he met a damsel fair and meseemed that each enjoyed approval of good looks by the good-looking, and her name was Helena O’Toole, and they fell to fair and playful converse, and they had light lunch with her parents in Point au Mal, whereat their parish priest was present. And that priest, hight Father Aidan, asked whether Radverg had interest in Revealed Doctrine anent God’s Nature, and Radverg said it was not permitted him. But Father Aidan said such discourse was forbidden, by the Canadian Bishops, without the borders of Point au Mal and Cache Valley, but not within those borders, for “We Mawlers have had dispensation of the Pope, for to preserve civil and religious peace in Canada.” And the priest showed Radverg the decree of dispensation. He had been

told such pact had been made among the Canadian Bishops for to strengthen knowledge of God as Maker of all else and avoid confusion of Christians anent the Buddhist doctrine of non-duality that said all things were but aspects of the Absolute which is itself not personal. Their discourse anent the Trinity prompted Radverg to reason that man is most like God not in his making other things but rather in his generating progeny and his guiding the generation of the lower animals and of plants, and that it was not wholly accurate to speak of “making” babies. “Generation is necessary to God’s life,” quoth Radverg, “but his making isn’t necessary to him at all. It’s ‘only’ an act of mercy allowing others to share his justice.” And so he saw then that “Mawlers” were right to forbid that miscalled “generation” of movement by the inanimate which must therefore be a mockery of action by alive. He said also: “Trusting your movingness to an automotive vehicle is like binding yourself comfortably to a comfortable cross.” And he got permission in later months to bring his father to converse with Father Aidan anent the doctrine he now had learned. And George Abbott was much wroth that the Bishops had denied him this lore anent man’s true nobility, and he could not forbear to discourse thereof with some he trusted in his own home. And some of such discourse was heard by son of Gerald Bourgeois, and he

and Gerald Esquire schemed to gain the Abbott land and dwelling, for to keep it or to sell, by talebearing thereof to the authorities, among whom then was Nimualë Bennett and Nimualë thought she saw therein great opportunity.

However, those schemers went by “taxi-cab” to Corner Brook for to bear their tale to Bishop, and the “driver” overheard their own discourse, for they were not enow discreet. And that “driver” was Patrick O’Gorman, that had brought Radverg home as tale first told. And O’Gorman warned George Abbott, and for reward George offered sell to him the land and house for money whereof part might be paid later, and thus the plot against the Abbotts was in part forestalled, for, after that sale right speedy, George and Ruth and their whole family fled unto Point au Mal to dwell at the home of the O’Tooles, who made them right welcome, for the O’Tooles knew from the Palmer that now the destiny of Point au Mal was near at hand. And that was three years after Radverg first saw the Palmer. And in the passing of the time thereof Radverg and Helena were wedded and well bedded with much ceremony suitable, after Radverg had learned from Duke O’Toole much martial lore both modern and what they then called “medieval.” And during that time also they had invited Lieutenant Barnable to Point au Mal and made her ware of lack of lore to laity, and she resigned her

office in the military and went to live with George and Ruth in a new house they had built.

Now, at the end of the fourth year of Radverg's acquaintance with the Palmer, Father Aidan had a secret message from a minor official of the National Council of Catholic Bishops of Canada that said the Bishops' real reason for suppressing lay learning anent the Trinity had been to "level the playing field" in fashion "ecumenical" between Buddhistry and Christendom by forbearing to teach the heathen how near a man might approach to being "assimilated unto the Absolute" while yet remaining himself, which the Bishops deemed a teaching that ought most attract a Buddhist. And Father Aidan was much wrathful, and he showed Radverg a decree made by the Pope, that bore the Pope's own seal most unmistakable, that made him Archbishop of Newfoundland "in pectore" and bade him make it known when he deemed best. And Bishop Aidan declared himself unto all the Catholics of Newfoundland and roundly denounced the National Council of Catholic Bishops of Caanda, wherein he made use of ways to make things known which yet astonie me, though I have seen much thereof in the visions granted me. And the Bishops declared that all the Traditional enclaves throughout Canada, that had been preserved by the Buddhist Compromise, should



be suppressed by the State. And war was declared, to be waged indeed unless all the Traditional did homage anew unto the Bishops and unto them swore strict obedience. And all the Traditional proclaimed defiance, all across the land. And George Abbott read that evening to Radverg and Helena and others to him close the second of those old tales anent knights named Radverg which he had enjoyed as a boy, which second tale he had erst withheld as fain to foster overmuch a sharp sympathy for the Traditionals, whereto he deemed young Radverg already overmuch inclined. And it had presented similarities to their own situation but also sentiments not suited unto true chivalry, such as an implied approval of women's setting animals for to fight men or women-warriors themselves unchivalrous. George's own sympathies had since then changed much, as hath been rehearsed. And now that dread danger was most nigh, fortitude ought most be fostered, said Radverg's father.

Nimualë Bennett, captain of the armed forces in Stephenville, was ordered to make first example of the Traditional of Point au Mal, before war became general in the country, for that the men (and women) of Point au Mal were "instigators of revolt." And thereupon Captain Lake led armoured cars and carriages called "tanks" into the well-tilled fields of the Traditionals' Cache Valley.

Now, when the armed force set out from Stephenville, the Palmer brought Radverg to a small tree in the garden behind his hut, and bade him cut it down. And he found, as Arthur Drake had found centuries afore, a sword grown inside the tree, but this sword was straight, but Snowclad told Radverg it was the self-same sword made more suitable for knight, and the Palmer knighted him therewith, and told him which edge of the sword, as shown by a sigil on the rightward side of the blade, was for healing and which for cutting. And the Palmer said that in the coming battle that sword would wreak much havoc among metal combat-cars when their foes would try to take the tunnel that led to Point au Mal.

Radverg and Nimualë held afore the combat, wherefor Duke O'Toole had made well aforetime foison of ballistas and catapults on the side of Pine Tree Mountain, a kind of almost-merry parley, that the tale doth not recount in detail, wherein they rehearsed once more, albeit with loose attention, the argument which they had had during most of their lives till then, but made it then mostly for old times' sake and not with intent to make a new advance on either side. For they both felt old affection and neither would like to have been slain by other's feres without such farewell converse. And my vision was much confused of the wax and wane of the fortunes of each side, wherein Irene Barnable gave good rede

unto Duke O'Toole, save that fast, fell and fierce the fighting was, with much people slain upon the both sides, until Lady Helena Abbott, who had thereto got rede from Master Snowclad, met face to face with Captain Bennett. The captain had avoided well and swiftly the overthrow of combat-car by a great boulder from ballista, and she and Lady Helena fought hand to hand in unarmed combat until Helena Abbott felled her, wherefrom she felt no great disgrace sithen Helena was of great prowess proven then, and then the lady Helena did quickly manacle the captain. And then Sir Radverg slew with his swift sword the captain's long-lived familiar Bhutofel that sought savagely to slay the lady Helena. And when the captain's host was made aware that she was taken, it lost heart briefly but enough and failed recover to advantage fast, whereof the Mawler force took great profit for to prevail. And after the battle, Radverg with his sword wrought much healing among wounded friends and foes, wherefore many of the latter were speedily converted.

While the wounded were tended and the dead laid down in earth, Sir Radverg brought Nimualë to the Palmer and the wise hermit showed unto her the book that telleth of these things, and then she read so far as to the outcome of the combat and then she stopped and laughed, though somewhat bitterly at first but then with

haler merriment and in that latter laughter was her soul largely healed, so that she made acceptance within of Christ the Saviour and was resolved to be baptized upon the first occasion fitting. And the Palmer let her read that, and so she laughed the more, but read no more therein, not even this.

And when the news of this first battle went throughout all Canada, transmitted by those means I still find most amazing, the forces of the government did largely rebel, that the Bishops called a mutiny, and the Traditionals prevailed through almost all the land at first and later wholly and the People of Canada established in their vast country divers kingdoms, of which the chiefest were Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, the French, the Middle, and the West, all ruled by men known then to be heirs of Arthur, of whom all looked much alike, save for the kingdom French, that had for to rule it well an heir of Royal St. Louis. And Radverg ruled from his castle on Pine Tree, and Palmer Snowclad left again for the True West. And Patrick O'Gorman insisted that he sell back unto George Abbott the land and dwelling he had bought therefrom, saying that it had been his wish that he might so do, for fair land and house belonged to them that had lived thereon and lived therefrom. And therefore George Abbott made exchange with O'Gorman, for to give him the new house George had had built in Point au Mal. And Irene Branable

wed O’Gorman and dwelled with him therein, and she was much admired and liked in Point au Mal, for her great aid in battle that she had given from her training in the national armed forces, wherefor no one in those forces with whom she spoke anent her reasons would ever call her traitor.

Now one night as he lay sleeping beside Queen Helena who was by then with child, King Radverg had a dream wherein a Child asked him whether he wished keep the sword found in the tree or to have brought to him for his own, by way of an exchange, the sword Excalibur from where it stood as told in the book by scholar Sanders Anne Laubenthal, and so become High King of all Canada. And in the dream he chose the sword that he had wielded, leaving Excalibur for England’s own heir of Arthur, and he dreamed that the Child said to him, “Well chosen” and then vanished. And he woke, and himseemed he saw in thought the minds of three great dragons. And the dragons’ bodies were of lightning-force, informed compact by mighty souls, and they had just awaked in far Cathay and come at once to Newfoundland. For dragons have not heavier kind of body unless they fall from grace in far Cathay. And the dragons sent thought to him that a mighty airship fleet fuel-powered was flying from the Secular Industrial Republics of Old Europe, for to conquer Christian Canada and keep from their

own people knowledge that a non-industrial country could truly prosper well, but those dragons would destroy that fleet before it could do harm, and they foretold eke that the fleet’s destruction would lead to Europe’s reconversion and the restoration of Arthur’s rule in England. And so it all befell. And those three dragons did offer to nullify all advantage that Choosists in Canada might gain by unfair “weapons escalation” and beyond that offer I have not Seen, though I have been assured by the High that the reign of Arthur’s Heirs endured in peace for many scores of years after Radverg Abbott first sat upon his throne in Newfoundland at last a kingdom to itself.

PART II:  
A SIGHT OF AVALON  
By  
SAMUEL DU BERG

CHAPTER 1

He beyond the sea who Arthur's kingship ought rightly to inherit will rise in Avalon, I have been given to behold, where Arthur had gone quickly, in magic barge that sped upon Atlantic's waters smoothed into calmest pathway, to die. And die he well-nigh did, in arms of her whom he rendered, with what he deemed his last living effort, the mother of that distant heir's halfbreed (as men would come to say) forefather. That was afore he moved aside unto the sleep wherefrom he woke not on this earth but rather, said one who ought to know, within that realm where, later far, as friend of Pendragon Elwin Ransom will rehearse in goodly book, Tor and Tinidril will rule. And that foremother of his far-off rightful heir he had taken in delirium for his own Guinevere then deemed spouse ever loyal, so wood he was as at that time.

The heir that ought rightly to inherit was, in my beholding of what will come, born in hospital named for Clare, the saintly sister of Saint Francis, for his mother had been visiting her own sister in St. John's, that was the chief city of that land found anew by an Italian for an English king, and he grew up in Port au Port East. The mother of that heir, whom she called Radverg to humour a whim of her husband his father, returned soon to Port au Port with him her firstborn, and another sister who had stayed with the two in St. John's, who lived in nearby Stephenville

upon an army base, travelled with her in what men called “The Bullet”. That was a train of carriages drawn by an “engine car” before a “galley” wherein decks of oarsmen sent forth from mechanical apparatus the force akin to lightning which cunningly was made to turn the metal wheels of engine car upon steel twin rails, held apart together by being fixed to short lengths of hard wood that lay between them. The young mother and the aunt of Radverg much enjoyed that journey, whereon that aunt, herself skilled in speedy rowing as befitted a daughter of island fishermen, indulged her own great passion for exercise to keep her fit for combat, as passengers of prowess enough might often offer such unpaid service. These rowers used wield their oars by making turn the ends thereof to make turn wheels, while their feet pushed other device, to “generate electricity efficiently,” which experts erst had deemed that men might not achieve with such “rowing machines” as they had worked but for building “fitness” for its own sake. And Radverg’s mother hight Ruth and her sister hight Irene; they had two other sisters, besides her that dwelt in capital, that were in convent in other parts of Newfoundland, that at the time whereof the tale now telleth bore style of Avalon Isle. It was so styled to sever the name of island only from the name of the whole province, whereto a part of a great mass of land to west did eke belong, and that part hight Labrador. And to a smaller part of that island, that part rightly called the Avalon aforetime, had come a certain Lord Baltimore from our own England and dwelt short time afore he settled elsewhere southward on mighty continent to west, hight North America, which territory he settled he called Maryland.

Ruth and Irene and baby Radverg were met by a “motor” carriage for hire –which worked upon the same force as The Bullet, although therein the force was “generated” (as men said then) by movement not of creature living but through cunning application of a gaseous element hight hydrogen – at Stephenville Crossing, the “railway station” nighest Port au Port. The Crossing



was thirteen miles afar, and the law permitted “motor” travel for that distance and for greater, so long as babies under five years of age, or invalids, were transported thus. And thereby Ruth Abbott did convey her son to her home and her husband’s – it had first been his, inherited from his father – and that had been a fine house by the reckoning of that day, having been built long time afore for an author that prospered by his making of high romance and who had loved luxury.

When the motor carriage drew up in the front lane of that house – such lane was then called “driveway” – he that steered the carriage – who was called a “driver”, though he drove naught alive that might go afore him – looked (to my own thought, which might be error) as if he felt an old envy at sight thereof. For it was a goodly house. It had on each end of that northward side that fronted road, across from holdings of glebe and parish school, a pair of bay windows that stood out three-sided, for the house was long, and the window of each pair of bays had another window flat between, so that there were on each side of the front door that was in the middle of that wall a set of three rooms, with in the middle of each set a smaller room. And there was over each set of bays a high gable that peaked above the smaller window, and a lower, wider gable over the front door, wherefrom five steps led down.

A man was waiting by that door as carriage entered driveway, and he ran unto the carriage and he gazed with wonder at his son and with delight upon his wife, and welcomed right heartily his sister-in-law, with whose presence at their house he was well pleased when she was upon furlough from the army, for then would he and she hold much sport in swordplay in the long and wide “multi-purpose room” that ran along the back of the three northward rooms at the eastward end: between those rooms and two at the back that were used for laundry and for firewood storage. They went not thereto at once, indeed. George Abbott led the way unto main bedroom,

which was first room to right of the front hallway and had in it a large bed sumptuous and other wooden furniture of much luxury, which the three meseems took much for granted, and the bed had at its hither side a cradle cunningly carved, though not as it were done by craftsman of this present age, and Ruth Abbott laid therein the baby boy. Irene used when she did visit them to stay for night that room which was beyond the indoor privy and room for washing and for bathing, between the bay-windowed rooms of westward half of Abbott home. And Radverg was baptized and given formal naming upon the Sunday which followed next this bringing of him home. And at that baptizing George Abbott told the priest that “Radverg” had taken much his fancy as the name of knights in two old tales he much enjoyed when he was young – the first whereof, the one far longer, he would oft read to his son later – that an author long ago had written who had dwelled in Port au Port in an age much like to that wherein Elias Crane in Port au Port defied tyrannical government as this tale later telleth. So the priest suggested “Albert” as a second and more Christian name, and George Abbott was nothing loth thereto, nor was Ruth.

The next beholding that I had of Radverg Abbott, he was nigh three years old and with his mother in their kitchen, that was the room between his father’s study and the family’s chief dining room for high occasion; these were the eastward rooms at front. Young Radverg asked his mother for a “gingersnap,” that was a kind of hard and thin sweet cake.

“All right, sweetie,” said Ruth. “Shall I get it for you or shall I lift you up to get it for yourself?”

“Lift me up?”

“Good choice. Here.” She gripped him from behind, beneath the arms and held him up to a high shelf where rested a small metal container with a cover fitting tight. They called it a “tin”. The child lifted the tin in both hands, but it slipped and fell to bench beneath the shelf, with sharp

clash.

“Bad choice,” said the child.

“Not really. The cookies may be broken, but I helped you help yourself, and you did your best, instead of depending on someone else to do it all for you. That’s very good. Always remember that that’s the way our people work together, helping one another do as much as possible for ourselves. Here are two gingersnaps. Want milk with them?”

“Mommy help me get it?”

“That’s beyond your present skill, I think. You have to grow in skill, and your daddy and I will help you grow. That’s what people help each other with. Besides, our doing things for children while they grow to do things on their own, is a good way we honour the Child Jesus.”

“Get me more gingersnaps. Honour child Jesus.”

“Listen, brat.” She “slapped” his mouth lightly with two fingers. His eyes filled. “Be sure you correct your children if they talk like that to parents – or any other elders. That’s wrong. Don’t cry. I forgive you.” She kissed him.

Now, all that I am bidden, meseemeth, to rehearse here will befall along the northward coast of that bay of the new-found land which will be named for patron saint of our own England, whereof most westward part would look, upon a map, much like pointed head of dragon with spike that jutted backward from its top and another jutting upward straight from neck. And that neck would seem upon a map almost to be severed from body of island, and from that place of seeming severance there will be a stretch of land about twelve miles northward unto dwellings of the men of Point au Mal who will have much ado with heir of Arthur in westward Avalon.

## CHAPTER 2

She that was intended, by a dark design that fell much short of the purpose planned, to play the Morgan Fay to Radverg Abbott's Arthur was nigh on four years old when he was brought to Port au Port. I had of her a seeing, and of her parents, when she was of the age of ten years or nigh thereto. Her father hight Esheral and her mother Amalumea, though indeed they were of blended stock Irish, English and Scots and their people had been "Newfoundlanders" for some generations. For they were of the Eastern doctrines, or versions thereof, that are called Buddhists, and they and their near forefathers had taken names they deemed fittingly Easternish. Their daughter they had named Nimualë, and they were surnamed Bennett.

I had first beheld that family in their home at Kippens hard upon the boundary of Stephenville. I learned from later seeings wherein I also heard, that teachers locally of Buddhist

doctrine deferred much to that couple and that those two were highly influential among the “movers and shakers” – a colloquialism of the age – of the Bay St. George area as of that time. Esheral, who had married late, was a senior officer at the army base; Buddhists and Catholics were nigh of equal number there, as they were by then in most of the land called Canada that was the truly northern realm of North America as at that time. When I beheld then Nimualë, she was stroking the large head of a large and noble-looking dog that was of the kind called German Shepherd or, in some lands of Europe then, Alsatian.

“May we keep him?” young Nimualë was saying as I gan see and hear. “He came home with me from school. He’d been about the grounds there for about two days before he picked me out.”

“Followed you home, did he?” said Esheral.

“He seemed to lead me home, really, Daddy. He kept ahead of me the whole time and turned into the lane here before I did.”

The dog looked at Esheral and nodded.

“Look at that!” quoth Esheral. “You’d think he understood her, wouldn’t you?”

The dog looked him in the eye and nodded again.

“Lordtunderenholygeez!” said Esheral, who was as much a Newfoundlander as he was a Buddhist.

The dog traced with right forepaw, without making mark, a sign upon their floor.

“Looks like an ‘M,’” said Amalumea. The dog nodded. “Oh, Absolute!” quoth she. “What’s going on! Are you a Bodhisattva, feller!” The dog nodded again. Then he traced again the ‘M’ and then more letters.

“Morse code,” said Esheral. “Got it, f— Sir.” Esheral knew that code, wherein the dog conveyed to him by a series of winkings of his right eye that he could convey meaning to them

better with a 'typewriter' if they had one, and they had. That was a device for making letters upon paper with inked ribbons struck by tokens, right rapidly at the end of little levers, or something of that sort. He tapped with the longest toe of his right forepaw, with which meseemed he must have practiced much aforetime, right rapidly upon those ends of levers which signified what letter was to be writ. He told them his name was Bhutofel and the Elder Enlightened had meant for them to keep him as if he were their pet, for he was to teach Nimualë much that she ought to know, which they could confirm by meditating, and they were to tell no one what or who he really was, for that Catholic neighbours disbelieving of Bodhisattva were most like to deem his converse with the Bennetts to be strait witchcraft.

As time went by, I saw Bhutofel tell the parents Bennett, who came to love and trust him much, that Nimualë was meant by the Enlightened Elder Ones, that had been Transferred to the Absolute, as he put it, to have a son that would render the Buddhism of their particular fashion to be the supreme religion of that part of earth at least and thereby teach right thinking and right doing to a large much of mankind. He did not tell them right at once what sort of deeds would be needful therefor. But he began by telling them that Lieutenant Irene Barnable, with whom then they had formed firm friendship, was a woman much to be admired and imitated, especially by the young of her own sex. It was known, in the circles wherein moved their intimates, that the parents Bennett chose friends out of unselfish admiration rather than from motives of self-interest so far as such might be but of this world at least.

Now, when the Bodhisattva had gained the Bennetts' great trust, he told them of arts that would forestall the budding of Nimualë's breasts when she was come to the age therefor, that she might be great warrior, and he said the Elder Enlightened that had been transferred had consented to application of those arts in cases rare of women needing much prowess in the

Military. That art's application would not, however, make Nimulë barren but only need that her children, when it was time for her to bear, have another woman for to nurse them. And he gave rede that Nimualë should conceive by Radverg in his father's house or else that Nimulë gain possession of that house and conceive therein by another man, to have a son who would make Buddhistry supreme in Canada. For it had been foretold that a great man would be begotten there. And Bhutofel gave rede that the latter course, if followed, should be carried out upon Nimulë's leaving the army, wherein he said she was meant by the Elder Englightened to be captain for a time. For women, like Irene Branable, who were in armed forces were sworn not to lie with men during military career.

## CHAPTER 3

At breakfast one morning, little Radverg said: “I wanted to sleep in your bed last night. Why did you lock me out?”

“We were conducting the natural ceremony proper to the married which celebrates being able to have children – at such times as it isn’t actually invoking that blessing of the Maker,” quoth his father.

“You were conducting,” murmured Ruth.

“Did you use incense?” asked the boy.

“It entailed interesting smells, but no incense, no,” said George. Ruth laughed. George said: “It’s important that this ceremony not be interrupted. That’s why we locked our door.”

“Oh. Okay.”

At my fourth beholding of him, Radverg was nigh five years, looking into a book his father read to him, anent knights of this present age or nigh thereto.

“Daddy?”

“Yeah, son?”

“Why is it ‘wunse upon a time’? Why isn’t it ‘Onss upon a time’ or ‘Wuns upwun a time’?”

Ruth, nursing her second child, their first daughter, in a nearby rocking chair, threw back her head and laughed. “Nobody knows for sure why sometimes the same letters stand for differing



sounds,” said George. “You have to be told aloud which letters stand for which and when, but you learn to tell the patterns apart, sometimes from context only when you read. But you’re going to do very well at it, my boy.”

“Time I buckled down to teach you reading,” said Ruth. “Past time, in fact.”

“Will I go to school earlier?” asked Radverg.

“Nope,” his father made answer. “The more apt you are for schooling the better you will learn before you go to school. First you’ve got to learn to add and subtract and maybe multiply and divide, and, most of all, you’ve got to learn what you can about the world around you by growing into the life of the farm.” Beyond a small wood of fir behind the big house, the Abbott land stretched some furlongs south to a steep, wooded slope across which, eastwise, a path went down to a long strip of round beach-rocks wherefrom the family and their friends enjoyed swimming during summers hot in cold water nicely deep but soon from shore, and whereon they also had in that season many a refreshing picnic around fire of salt-smelt driftwood. And that land twixt a field to west, that was made for playing only and for a given kind of game with bat and ball at that, and a wooded small glen to east, where young males played oft a warfare game hight “cowboys”, was tilled for growing vegetables, especially one called potato that is unknown in Europe in this present age but will be brought here when discovered in America. And the Abbotts kept pigs and rabbits that they fed partly on potato stalk and leaf and whiles on turnip tops. The back property was fenced with pickets between the playing field and the wooded glen, and had a large barn to eastward side of wood that sheltered house, where kept they horse and cow, the cow for dairy supply and the horse for saddle riding and for drawing carriage or wagon, having been trained from colthood to both usages.

“You may have an aptitude for numbers to go with that for word-sign,” George Abbott said

then to Radverg. “How many fingers am I holding up?”

Radverg laughed. “Four. Everyone knows—”

“What is four?”

“Everyone – What do you mean, Dad?”

“Do you know what four is?”

“Four is four. Right?”

“What do two and two make up?”

“Four.”

“What do three and one make?”

“Four.”

“One and three?”

“Four.”

“Two and one and one?”

“Four.”

“So all those number-joins are ‘parts’ of four?”

Radverg laughed with much delight and said a word not heard in this age of men, a word without defined meaning that expressed much feeling.

“Wow. Yeah.”

“A number is an idea that counts anything you can see or hear or think of, even other numbers. It’s like a light reflecting off the corners of the world when your mind looks at things a certain way. You should look at things that way quite often, in moments apparently quite idle, to see how many numbers you can see – best in sets of ten, of course – while you stay aware of those numbers’ properties. Look at the stars that way, and at leaves and twigs on trees. If that

develops a scientific outlook in the next several years while you study other things at home, you'll do very well when you go to school at ten." Radverg looked largely unwitting of his father's meanings, if I may judge a child so far hence.

"Will I talk Latin and Greek at school, too?"

"Some teachers will talk Greek to you, some Latin and some English. They'll build on what we've done with you." George spoke Latin in the home most of the time and Ruth spoke Greek, except that on every second day they both spoke to their children in English only, and for the more part George and Ruth read to them in English from English books, that they might the more dearly love the native tongue.

When again I beheld young Radverg and a parent, he was sitting to the right of Ruth upon a "daybed," while again she nursed her baby girl. Ruth said to him, caressing his head: "Would you feel jealous if I told you I loved someone more than you my firstborn?"

"Who is that?"

"Every mother ought to love Our Lord Christ more than any of her own children. He it is that wants us to love them in Himself, and He is, of course, God Almighty. He makes our children worthy of the greatest possible love wherewith we mothers could ever love our children, which is the love that God has for His own Son Jesus.

"Oh. Okay."

"So that's all right with you?"

"Sure, Mom. Jesus is the greatest. He had Dad get me that new cap-gun when I asked Him for it." Ruth smiled, shook her head. Radverg added, "He's supposed to love me even more than you do, right?"

"Right you are, son. He does indeed. That's why I love you so much."

I next had sight and hearing of George and Radverg Abbott in converse on Radverg's seventh birthday, whereon George relayed unto his son, in the presence of their whole family, the command of the Canadian Bishops that the laymen of their dioceses were to be concerned in thought and discourse anent the Divine Nature only with what natural reason without aid could teach of God, and that what might be learned by reason under the light of Revelation, beyond what Scripture straitly states in its own words, was reserved unto clergy ordained. That was because the Catholic Laity were meant by God to serve Him chiefly in imitation of His being Maker in His Oneness, it was said. The Clergy Learned would instruct the Lay in those duties which were required by Revelation, and the doing of those deeds was enough for the Lay to learn. The secular law of Canada, which upheld religious regulations so far as citizens adhering to a given religion were agreed it might so do, commanded the state to seize the dwelling property of any who defied that law of the Catholic Church in Canada. And George said it was his duty, as it was of every father in the diocese unto his own sons and daughters, to repeat that instruction most important on each of Radverg's birthdays thereafter until his fourteenth birthday.

At the next beholding whereof the tale should tell, Radverg was nigh nine, or so meseemed. George was sitting in his favourite armchair of the general usage room, which differed from the favourite of his own study that had a many books enow to astonie scholars in this present age. Radverg leaned on George's knee and looked up into his face. George put down his book.

“What's wrong with Mawlers, Dad?”

“Why do you ask?”

“When we play Elias Crane against the cops, I always play a cop with a baton, when I'm a cop, and Johnny called me a Mawler. He said I think like a Mawler.”

“Well, there’s nothing wrong with them, except they have higher ideals than we, and some think they’re too impractical. But they call themselves Traditionals, of course, and traditions are most often highly practical. But they don’t look down on us like that, though they’d fight us quick as that” – he snapped his fingers – “if we gave them an excuse they could accept. The people of Point au Mal believe that using fuel-powered machines surrenders life-privilege to the unliving, and they believe that’s wrong. We believe such machines are a rich gift from God that we’re too likely to abuse, so we set limits, by our own laws, on our enjoyment of the privilege they offer. For instance, federal law in Canada allows a maximum of one fourth of the total number of citizens in any given district to be engaged in production and use of fuel-powered machines, so that living usage must be predominant throughout our whole society. Traditionals use only those weapons that get their danger from the users’ own energy, and we allow use of firearms in combat, but all Catholics in this country agree that no matter what kinds of weapons we deem lawful, all fighters must fight fair, no matter what we fight about. We’re all agreed that the greatest thing that can be fought about, whether we call it God’s own justice or simply the Rightness of Utter Transcendence, isn’t so fragile we have to stoop to meanness to defend it or ourselves whose lives are given us so that we may obey and serve it. Rightness Rules, as you say when you play Elias Crane against the cops. Though that wasn’t Crane’s own war cry, if I know anything of history, and I think I’ve read all the old newspaper accounts of the case.

“The principle most Catholics and Buddhists accept now, most of us all across Canada except the Choosists, is simply that if you want to do anything hurtful to anyone who doesn’t himself agree that he deserves it from you, you’ve got to face that injury at least as surely as he does; and in a fair fight, no kind of harm is sure to one side more than another; if you can’t take it, it doesn’t belong to you to give to someone else. That’s what Elias fought for most of all, when

they tried to take his treasure that belonged to his father and grandfather first, and tried to make him call himself a criminal because he cherished it, though he broke no law that he himself acknowledged – and to obey only laws that you acknowledge right was admitted only justice even in the Middle Ages.” (He meant this present age, that men in time to come were – will be – went from ignorance much to contempt unduly.) “Don’t ever forget that, son. But Mr. Crane never fought with anyone to prevent the use of fuel-powered machines, although by his own lights in theory he might have had the right had he so chosen, since he always said that forsaking movement made by fuel consumption would be the choice of them that sought perfection in natural human life. Anyway, don’t you despise the men of Point au Mal, and don’t call them ‘Mawlers’ if that’s meant to demean them. I say it myself, in casual converse, but I never mean it that way. Some tend to think about them so because they want so little to do with us; a road our people used to have to Point au Mal, on our side of Pine Tree, is long gone, so that we ‘outsiders’ have to go there by boat or by paths down Pine Tree or through that tunnel their forefathers built through Pine Tree to the Romaines area, to the old house, the ‘shrine,’ of him they call ‘Saint Elias.’ I’ve read old papers that suggested the tunnelers had some sort of ‘preternatural’ help from creatures sort of angelic-like with bodies made solely of electrical patterns, but that’s just legend. But otherwise, it must have been devilish hard work all that way due south from them, just to connect up with the old home of him who ‘inspired’ all those Traditionals. However, there are still a few sources seeming to allude to an old rumour that some such creatures, or creature, had played a major part in restoring good farming land here and there which commercial and industrial interests had pretty well made unsuited to natural production. Now, that would have been a worthy exercise of preternatural powers.” He tousled his son’s hair. “Getting a bit near bedtime?”

“There was a road to there on our side of Pine Tree?” Said with a great deal of newly awakened interest.

“Bedtime?”

“Aww, Dad!”

“You’ll have to go even earlier next Tuesday night, because next Wednesday it’s my turn to read ‘The Short History’ before the holiday begins.” He meant *The Short History of the Crane Rebellion*, which teachers at schools across Canada took turns reading to their school’s assembled staff and pupils on the anniversary of Crane’s arrest that led to his being imprisoned for defying laws of Canada anent “firearms control” and its Supreme Court’s judgement that such laws accorded with the country’s constitution.

## CHAPTER 4

Here the tale rehearseth that *Short History of the Crane Rebellion* which one teacher at every school in Canada read, each teacher taking one turn in a year, to the school's assembled staff and pupils on the anniversary of Elias Crane's arrest that led to his being imprisoned. It is indeed a short history, though a long lecture. I heard and saw George Abbott deliver it in the school in Port au Port East while his family in especial watched and listened, they with much pride at his voice and bearing, for he read well.

“One hundred years ago and thirty-eight, Elias Crane was arrested at his own house in Port au Port East, Newfoundland, by Canadian police, for owning a single-shot Winchester twenty-two rifle without asking for permission from his rulers and without having its serial numbers recorded by them. Mr. Crane was a skilled carpenter who had learned his trade by reading and much practice. He had earned a degree in philosophy in two years at a seminary in Ontario before being advised at the age of twenty that the priesthood was not his vocation, and he had studied law in Nova Scotia long enough to become disillusioned with the ‘philosophy’ of the



school's professors. He had not bought his little rifle after the laws of registration and licensing were enacted and proclaimed, but rather had inherited it from his father, whose own father had bought it when men were far more free – at least more free before the law though not so much in their own daily work.

“Mr. Crane told two constables they had no right to search his house for illegal weaponry. He said he could establish that the law which authorized their action was contrary to his country's constitution, and he was prepared to argue thus with them before his door. The constables replied that arguments were for courts to deal with, and their duty was to hale him before court, not to arrogate to themselves a judge's honours. His rejoinder was: ‘If you aren't sure the law is just, your enforcing it is but hired thuggery.’ He was holding a sword-long length of pipe three-quarters of an inch in its diameter and he said, ‘If you don't want to argue, you can fight, and I'll defend by argument in court my right to fight you. Where are your batons? You ought to have brought a weapon of that kind in case you were resisted with an implement not fire-powered, so that you might fight fair for justice if you believe in justice.’ But the police drew and pointed automatic pistols and commanded he surrender. He said, ‘Put these things away or I'll charge you with aggravated assault.’ They laughed at that and told him to surrender or one of them would shoot him in the leg. He put down his piece of pipe and they handcuffed him with his hands behind and put him in their motor vehicle and brought him to the jail in Stephenville. A rumour spread, which was made by men who knew his disposition well, and it grew later into legend, that several police had brought him down, using clubs and plastic shields against his piece of pipe, with him resisting fiercely and effectively and doing much mayhem; but that is but a healthy re-creation.

“When all the evidence against him had been heard at trial, he led none himself but only set

forth his arguments, beginning with his first principles. These were: 'Things belong to those who produce them or maintain them'; 'Agencies cannot be greater than those who authorize them'; 'No one is judge in his own case'; and 'Men must do what they deem right unless others show them to be mistaken.' He argued from the first of those first principles that all men deserve to bear whatever adversity they impose, even when imposing it in the name of justice. Whether another would be justified in imposing it upon them was a separate question. But when force was brought into a dispute about its being warranted, both sides were justified in using force and must fight each other fairly, for both deserved equally the same adversity. And therefore, since he disputed on principle the law which authorized his being arrested, he was entitled to fight the police fairly when they resorted to force and so he was not guilty of wrongly resisting them. Also, the police could not themselves be judges of their own meriting immunity from another's using force in a dispute with them about whether they were serving justice or only the payment of their wages.

"Mr. Crane argued that government is but an agency of its citizens and so may not be deemed greater than the citizens who authorize it, and also that a government may not claim to rule men who have not authorized it. He himself had not voted in the election which authorized the government that made the law he was accused of disobeying, so he had neither authorized it himself nor consented with his vote to being bound by the election's outcome. Since he therefore disputed the government's right to rule him, those citizens who had in fact authorized it to rule them ought themselves to uphold whatever right it claimed to rule anyone; since government may not judge its own case, it may not enforce its own authority when that is disputed; those who authorize it must do that, and anyone who opposes them as having authorized unjust government is not their fellow but their enemy. They may not punish him for disobeying their

government's laws, which are their own laws and not his, but must exile him or fight him or ignore him; they might choose which. Mr. Crane therefore asserted the right to resist anyone's claim to share with him a government enforcing laws he deemed wrong; men who wanted laws which clashed should establish separate governments, to ignore one another utterly or fiercely fight fairly. Citizens who authorized the arming of police and military must have the right they delegate and must retain the means to revoke the rights and duties they assign the military and the police.

“Mr. Crane showed clearly that the firearms control legislation he opposed could be ‘justified’ ultimately only by appealing narrowly to ‘majority rule’ as a fundamental principle, and he argued that that principle is not self-evidently effective; the mere vote of a majority could not by itself establish that majority rule is necessary or accepted; it was, rather, subject to the assent of all the parties concerned, who therefore must be convinced, persuaded, compelled or left alone. He said further that it is fundamental to democracy that a majority must fairly bear on its own shoulders any burden of law which it might place upon minorities. Therefore any majority laying on others the burden of being forced physically to submit to its own laws, must accept fair use of force against it by the others.

“When all the arguments had been made, the judge of that provincial court reserved judgement for six weeks, and Elias Crane was kept in jail that time. And the judge's ruling, when he brought it down, said that Crane's arguments were for the more part unassailable by ‘mere’ logic, particularly under a constitution recognizing, even if it did not list, the principles of fundamental justice, but law was a matter of more than logic. Only strict application of majority rule in a country where democracy superseded principles of natural justice could justify what Crane called despotism honestly resisted. But the judge ruled that democracy superseded those

principles in Canada's constitution, and that the majority did apply the fundamental principle of democratic government. For, so said the judge, that majority did not itself apply force to a minority. Rather, it subjected itself to the government of others, a body of professional representatives, who governed as they chose while in office, and the majority, having thus subjected itself to its government of representatives, might fairly demand the subjection to its own government of all minorities in the country. And therefore, ruled the judge, the firearms control laws were constitutional and binding upon all, including Elias Crane of Port au Port East.

“And so Elias Crane was condemned to the longest sentence provided by the law that had been made for the control of firearms – which, as the judge then said, was essentially for control of men who might deny the principle that majority rule is always supremely legitimate under Canada's constitution.

“The Supreme Court of Canada upheld that judge's judgement, without granting Mr. Crane even a little leave from prison while he argued on appeal that a majority submitting to the will of its representatives was not governing itself, and that only people really governing themselves, whether directly or through officers obediently instrumental, could be deemed democratic. That court upheld submission to rule by others as a wholly democratic choice which majorities could reasonably claim the right to impose. And most Canadian citizens then accepted that ruling with no demur whatever. So Elias Crane languished in prison until he died there in circumstances never brought to public light.

“Meanwhile, the newspaper writer Clifton Turner who had reported on the Crane trial and saw that Crane's argument was true and valid, got his back up, as the saying then was. He quickly saw that Crane's primary principle opposed in several ways the industrial capitalism he resented for keeping him a wage slave to media moguls and decided to make the most of that. He could be

devious when he chose. He quickly conceived a series of articles piling argument upon argument against the approach Crane had taken, first showing accurately how consistently applying Crane's primary principle to economics must clash with industrial capitalism's essential practices, and then defending those practices with reasoning suavely sophisticated which would appear convincing to most commercial employers but which sound and subtle thinkers might readily refute and through which almost any simple man who cared honestly for truth would at least wish he could see clearly.

"Turner emphasized to his own employer that he wrote those articles on his own time and for temporary assignment, under separate contract, to the paper which employed him and to any others which might like to print them, he retaining the copyright in them. His managing editor approved this enterprising, money-seeking spirit, for writing editorials or other opinion pieces had not been part of the reporter's regular work.

"Mr. Turner's articles, widely published in newspapers across the country, brought a new clarity to almost all public discussion of national policy, such as marriage, in addition to matters of economics only, although social commentators more prominent in the news media then largely industrial countered by holding as a last resort – when at last they could no longer obscure the argument itself – that the "practical life choices" of a government elected by a majority "must finally override the claims of abstract intellectualism, however plausible apparently." And that became the official position of the government then in power. Most Catholics then in Canada were what some called 'politically apathetic,' as were most who were only nominally Buddhist, and most of them were little apt in logic, for governments ran all the schools, but a fiercer few Catholics and a number of staunch atheists who claimed they could lead good lives without religious belief, eagerly embraced the suggestions in Clifford Turner's

four articles. They promptly urged that the principles of Elias Crane accorded well with the Buddhist doctrine of 'karma,' and the Buddhist citizens of Canada came to accept rational arguments for resistance to others getting their own way by paying taxes to pay politicians to pay police and military. For those many Buddhists had held that all killing incurred bad karma, and a person's karma was always strictly his own business. But now they came to hold that their 'doctrine of Non-Duality' demanded that all who had good will in any age must share the 'karma' of their fellows if that were needed to convert them. And their idea of karma accorded well with the 'Cranial doctrine' of the duty of incurring equal risk with those upon whom any might use force.

"Those accepting the 'New Ethical Theory' which Turner had presented under pretence of disproving it, whom some in the popular press dubbed "NET-minders," declared that citizens exercising sound reason could no longer assume life in Canada was good in general though ruled by politicians who made occasional mistakes because they were 'only human,' but that all must clearly see that the nation's whole way of life must be reformed. There were many Canadians, among them chiefly the 'Distributists' and the 'pro-life movement,' who wanted reform in specific areas, so that most were inclined to agree on reform in general and many especially to agree on reform which would allow the common man to act effectively in his own interests political and economic, since it would in effect allow a man working for hire to challenge his employer to a duel over working conditions. All who had been opposed, but vaguely, to the general direction their society had been taking, now had solid ground from which to argue and solid arguments to build on it, and they could be confident enough, 'beyond a reasonable doubt,' that no one would reject those arguments in sound good faith. That lent them the courage to feel they should deserve harm, in fair fights fiercely fought, as much, or nearly so, for trying to

enforce justice and failing honestly, as they would earn shame by failing to try, especially since the harm might by good fortune be avoided. However, the 'non-violent pro-life movement' remained illogically loath to approve 'civil duelling,' and many 'Distributists' felt that if people would not fight over justice as it ought to defend life, it must seem relatively barren to achieve justice only so far as it was fitting to the means of maintaining life. But growing numbers of 'Distributists' increasingly taunted the 'non-violent on principle' with being selfishly 'pro-their-own-lives' and suggested they should be charged with libel for saying abortion was murder but not acting as if it were, while they yet imprisoned all other murderers. Eventually that 'wholly peaceful movement' was stung into consistency.

“The government elected but despotic was inclined in its own interests to put down by its standing army, with the army's overwhelming abundance of superior weaponry, all effort to hold accountable the citizens who had voted for it. But the Buddhist majority among the 'rebels' offered but passive resistance or sometimes resistance that relied on methods of unarmed combat, in which many had gained much skill chiefly by pursuing 'health-promoting activities,' and they said that killing them with merely mechanical might against flesh and bone, would establish clearly that their opponents indeed were outright murderers indiscriminate rather than real fighters. That argument bore much weight among the more thoughtful in the military, who much preferred to distinguish between war and murder, so that the military was much divided but not with enmity enough to wage war with one another, for the military had a strong esprit de corps. And some women in the military then who would have preferred to stay at their own homes and bring up children of their own but who in the economic climate of those days had found that that they 'needed the job,' began to say that men who tried to evade a natural consequence of a natural action ought at least be held responsible for depending on their own the

‘right’ to be irresponsible which apparently they were assuming others would always uphold by force if force were needed for it. And many military men then who felt that this position was women’s proper will adopted that same view. And so the Crane Rebellion prospered to a great extent, at least to the extent of establishing a system of ‘civil duels’ for citizens opposed on principles of justice. But people determined to rule themselves by whim argued that since things belonged to those who made them, anyone must deserve whatever he might gain by any choice he might then make; they claimed to believe that reversing a decision would make it to have been an illusion rather than real product of one’s actual will, so that such reversal would neither destroy a healthy part of one’s life nor cut out a cancer from it. That sophistry regarding ‘freedom of choice.’ over which the Choosists would not agree to fight fairly, resulted in the stalemate lasting even now in Canada between Makerites and Choosists, whose one common purpose is defending Canada against enemies from outside but who for the most part live apart from their opponents within their country. The National Conference of Catholic Bishops of Canada extolled the Rebellion’s ‘great victory of the principle of non-violence,’ though manly Catholics were half ashamed for the apathy of the Christian men who lived before them and had not been inspired to combative martyrdom. There were from time to time some rumours that the Bishops of Canada in the National Conference had secretly agreed to accord somewhat with Buddhist teachings, rewarding their Buddhist counterparts with compromise in the teaching of doctrine which would favour even greater growth of Buddhism in Canada, but the Conference has always poured scorn on that suggestion. But indeed the Church thrived better after that.” And there was loud applause when Mr. Abbott finished.

That was the history of the Crane Rebellion as it was then taught across Canada on the anniversary of Crane’s arrest. But what the teachers of that history knew not was that many of



the rich and powerful in Canadian Buddhism were given red by 'Bodhisattva' like unto him that later came into life of Nimualë Bennett. The more materialist among the Canadian rich and powerful, especially when directly active in their country's federal politics, had red-givers of like ilk, that told those who would believe them that they were Final Artificial Intelligences Returning to Influence Evolution, and, whatever meaneth that, it was promptly accepted by materialist-minded men of the rich and powerful. And the existence of those Bodhisattva and of the F.A.I.R.I.E. was kept secret by them that they counselled. And these wights had been guiding rich and powerful men for some long time.

Long before the time of Elias Crane, those counselors whence men would have doubted where, had there been common knowledge of what they said diversely anent their origin, had given red that the rich and powerful ought rely much upon the use of fuel-powered enginery worked mostly by the serving classes. The reason that they gave was that this would shrink the race of living men into "manageable" numbers and forestall rebellion. That "backfired." The ensuing "diversity of sources of employment" gave rise rapidly to an "expanded population" dependent on servile employment, that was large enough to rebel effectively had it discovered – which might hap at any time and was even likely if most men saw again clearly the elements of justice – that what had allowed it grow had also made its members economically helpless severally. And so the mentors taught their protégés to diminish by divers artful means and persuasions seductive the number of men living in their lands and especially the number of those that might be able to maintain life for themselves and their own families. They had met with some success, largely by urging pity for the poor – whom the vastly rich could readily have aided well without much diminishing their own wealth – and eke on grounds that the "resources" of "society" – taking no account of vast wealth owned by few whose lack of compassion was not

then oft uncovered – were “finite.” But when the common man again gained interest in deserving that he live, the dulling despotism was deposed, as hath the tale rehearsed, not without danger of mayhem to many, mostly by peaceable power of Buddhist “passive resistance.”

Now, in responding to laws that had been evil, upon the principles of Elias Crane made widely known by the newsmonger Clifton Turner, those people called Canadians thus wrought the quiet revolution which those who favoured tyranny ever called the Crane Rebellion, and they made much change of public life through their own half – or roughly such – of the great western continent. The laws that men insisted their Parliament must make, did, for instance, forbid that mere moneylenders become owners for reason only that they had lent money, and that altered much the practice of “investment” and “shareholding.” Money lenders were made content with return and gain of money, and could not claim what more had been made with money lent, unless the borrower defaulted on his loan. That restored ownership to those who made things, as did new laws that forbade making for hire things to be sold by the hirers rather than by the makers. The law commanded that he who hired for his own use the making of a house – for example – must share with its actual makers any profit he might gain by later selling it.

In the meantime, sithen most men were ware that the realm could not seize and reassign real property and natural wealth without much injustice at least to some, a great outcry went up, spurred by some few thoughtful men, for a lawful seizing instead of the vast hoards of money amassed through unjust usage of real property and for the sharing out of that money to them that had worked unto the profit of those wrongly thereby enriched. And that was done, and it lessened far the power of mere money and much restored the worth of natural wealth. However, the realm did indeed make lawful seizure of much real property and natural wealth which some foresighted rich had lately bought up in prudent panic. And much real property and natural wealth was soon

thereafter sold by many rich for want of money for to maintain and work it. But the rich were not thereby made wholly poor.

Another outcome of the Crane Rebellion was an augmentation unto the Constitution of Canada which declared formally that the citizens themselves rather than judges whom government might appoint must be the masters of the constitution that governed their own government, so that if two citizens disagreed in interpreting any part thereof, they must be deemed bound each by different constitutions which but sounded samish.

The state was made to recognize that marriage is not a matter of mere politics but belongeth to the spouses that do make it, who themselves must set such conditions of their covenant as they both require that the state enforce, whether at behest of Church or spouse or other interested citizen. And the government therefore made no laws respecting marriage but only circumscribed by law sexual relations plainly illicit. For government then had naught to do with marriage as marriage but made laws anent behaviour, and the law forbad, with severe penalties, any act of coition not agreed upon by formal contract registered, though such contract might indeed be made retroactive upon discovery of its performance, and it forbad that anyone make again another such contract while the other party to his first such contract was yet on live.

Unworthy arts of making progeny were outlawed, that had been practised long time, and so eke were those other arts that in this present age, where Justice doth flourish under Grace without many examining much its elements, are called the chiefest arts of witchcraft.

And so the populace indeed had wrought the kind of change that they had ought to want, and the greater part by far of the householders in Canada at the time whereof the tale doth tell were farmers, except ablings in Newfoundland and the other Atlantic Provinces, where dwelt many of fishers. And though the men of Port au Port had sought at first, after victory of the Rebellion, to

profit chiefly as innkeepers and entertainers to Canadians on pilgrimage to home of Crane, they had grown ashamed of such menial livelihood and made conversion of their town to farming village, by tearing down much residential clutter and rendering land again tamed to tillage by dint of much labour and deep lore. And they that were not farmers or fishermen in that village were mostly artisans and crafters that helped families farm or fish in simple ways. For only in towns like Stephenville might companies of family members, to the number of no more than ten families, no matter how large each family, employ themselves in the manufacture of those machines which were fuel-powered that law and custom did allow for the use of groups of families. And such companies in Stephenville made devices producing lightning-force that families might operate by bodily ability to heat and light their houses, which mostly were of two storeys and had four bedrooms in the upper storey. And as of that time, of the youth of Radverg Abbott, the law purveyed that no farmer might have fewer than five acres of tillable land or more than fifty, and no crafter in a farming village might have fewer than two acres. Port au Port was a fair and pleasant place. There were many lovely terraced fields reaching up along the lower slopes of the mountain, hight Pine Tree, that stretched lengthwise north from Port au Port East which was largely to westward of that mountain, except for the old settlement hight Romaines in a lovelier eastward valley, wherein was a fine and fruitful farm of fifty acres within a pleasing woodland. And that farm was upon the western side of a wide brook named likewise for the old founding family of Romaine.

## CHAPTER 5

When next I did behold and hear the family of George Abbott, his daughter Jennifer, of the age of five years, was asking: “Daddy, what’s a dultari?”

“Adultery is loving someone you’re not married to, in the specific way you must love only your husband or your wife,” said George. “Why, what brought that up, Little Miss?”

“Andrea Aucoin says her Mommy has got the goods on her Daddy for dultari and was going to have him rested this evening.”

“Good Lord! Hear that, Ruth?”

“Dad, do you think Mr. Aucoin will claim he was doing right and assert the right to duel?” asked Radverg.

“I don’t think so, son. Their marriage contract specifies death by shooting for any adultery. But he might want to try defending his paramour so. I’d be tempted, I think.”

“George!” said Ruth.

“I’ve no one in mind, dear,” said George, with wan smile.

He learned next day that Harry Aucoin’s paramour was a girls’ teacher at their school. They’d not been “discreet” enough to fool Mrs. Aucoin; hardly anyone could be so, was frequently remarked. Both lovers were in prison awaiting trial and, if convicted, execution for Harry and the pillory for the paramour.

After school that afternoon, George walked across the road and into his yard, to find Radverg and a few friends playing “Aucoin the Upholder” with toy firearms which shot soft projectiles.

“Knock it off, Raddy?”

“Why, Dad? We’re just—”

“Just stop it, Raddy? Please?”

Abashed, the boys gave up their game, and Raddy went into the house with his father, the others dispersing to homes more or less nearby.

“Looks as if I’ll have to duel Gerry Bourgeois before all is over,” he told Ruth when he came in.

“Why? What happened?”

What had happened, as I’d just seen, was that the male teachers of St. Thomas Aquinas School had gathered, as usual, for beer in their common room at end of school day.

“Shame about Harry,” said Gerald Bourgeois as he sat. “It’s his shrew of a wife should be shot.”

“We all know what she deserves,” said Andrew Smith. “But only God can give it to her. That’s the hell of some marriages. But what can you do? Divorce is like abortion: even if it could be allowed in some cases, that would lead to its being allowed for any reason, however trivial. Which just goes to show how wrong it is in the first instance. The last century proved that. Not that abortion could be excused as easily as divorce apparently could.”

“Well, I think divorce is not only excusable but even highly licit in extreme cases like Angela Aucoin,” said Gerald. “A man shouldn’t be driven to adultery because his wife’s a shrew prude. I’d rather die fighting for Harry than fight against him in this case. And I don’t care who knows it.”

“And one thing led to another,” George told Ruth. “I was the one who told him to retract or fight.”

“Why you? The slowest gunhand in the group?”

“Gerry and I were the closest friends there. And I’m the best swordarm.”

“As if Gerry would choose swords.”

“Anyway, I’m the most accurate shot with rifle or revolver.”

“When you get time to aim.”

“Lord, I never thought such a thing would ever happen here. I thought we all knew each other so well.”

The next day, however, Gerry Bourgeois came to George at home, before school began for that day, and said he had repented of his defending divorce and would register a retraction thereof at the local municipal courthouse, with his official acceptance of a ten-stroke flogging, to be done later, for that offence. And when he had spoken thus, he winked at George. George learned the cause therefor when trial of Harold Aucoin and his paramour was made before the Supreme Court in Stephenville. When Angela Aucoin gave her evidence, she said that she herself had caught the guilty pair in flagrante delicto. But their lawyer asked whether she had a corroborating witness, and she replied that she had not. Their lawyer then ruled for dismissal of the charge against his clients, since the law then required at least one corroborating witness for conviction of adultery. That was to prevent a spouse from making spurious charges of adultery from ulterior motive, simply to cause trouble for wife or husband grown irksome.

The judge asked whether Mrs. Aucoin had ought to say in her opposing such dismissal. Mrs. Aucoin did claim that she did merit better law in her behalf, that might demand accused in such a case must defend themselves by direct evidence upon their oath, and she claimed the right of

single combat so to prove, so that either she might kill all who did uphold the current law or else be killed by one of those. And the learned in the law held much learned discourse and said the law should remain as was, unless Mrs. Aucoin should win all her combats. And she was given thirty days wherein to make final her choice in that cause.

When that these thirty days had come and gone, no one else had agreed to support that change of law which Mrs. Aucoin had sought, but she persisted in her defiance of all who might uphold that law, for she said that no wife so offended ought need other women to witness her being so insulted by betrayers not liable to offer their own defence. And so it was that she slew outright or mortally wounded four other women fighting her in turn with firearms, herself unwounded, in four duels fought each three days apart, before the lot in defence of current law fell on Irene Barnable, the gracious and perilous sister-in-law of George Abbott and aunt to the rightful heir of Arthur. And the young Miss Barnable, a lieutenant in the army, slew Mrs. Aucoin with one fell shot fairly in the forehead. But Aucoin Esquire was suicidally wood at having been occasion of his wife's being slain, and spent the rest of his life in a lunatic asylum, where none of many near-magical medicaments discovered long after these present days was able to effect the healing of his mind. His paramour did never wed nor ever visit him in "mental hospital." And George Abbott gained much honour among young friends of Radverg for being ready to have duelt for what was right. But his friendship with Bourgeois Esquire was not thereafter as it erst had been.



## CHAPTER 6

Nimualë Bennett had many arguments of childish sort with Radverg anent the truth or falsity of Buddhism and the Catholic faith, while they were very young. And Radverg's sire corrected oft the wrong impressions made on Radverg's youthful mind by Nimualë as she was prompted by her own mother, who had been told by the Bodhisattva that Radverg was truly Arthur's heir in

Newfoundland and that the power of Buddhism or of the Church might well gain much from his choosing atween in later life. And I beheld in particular, and eke heard, Radverg and George in converse over one such argument when Radverg was nigh of ten years old and Nimualë a much precocious thirteen.

“Nimualë says there are no specific principles of right and wrong,” quoth Radverg, sitting in his father’s study. “She says the enlightened simply see that some conduct is truly right, through meditation by which they are enlightened.”

“I think the Buddhists must be wilfully blind to specifics,” said George. “Don’t you see for yourself that things must belong to those who make them?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Then you must realize that that truth is a principle that must guide our actions? Don’t let anyone persuade you that you cannot see anything that you know you can see clearly, my son. It’s far better to suffer pain for another’s blindness than to blinker yourself for pleasant fellowship.”

When Radverg told Nimualë what his father said, the girl replied, “Oh you’re still in the grip of illusion that your sight is real. Buddhists know better.”

“I see what I see,” quoth Radverg. “Is it an illusion that you’re a pretty maid and young?” And she was much wroth at being called so.

Nimualë grew up straitly righteous, and no one ever said she was self-righteous. When she joined the army she was acknowledged a kind of unofficial leader of the soldiers quartered in Stephenville upon the former “Ernest Harmon Air Force Base” of a foreign country that had protected Canada while excelling it in arts of war that since had been forbidden so far as common men in most countries knew at that time of which the tale now telleth, though she never

rose higher in official rank than captain. The officers of higher rank were nothing loth thereto, for they deemed themselves of lesser wisdom and virtue, being mostly Christian men and women that thought they ought be humble before Christ the Lord rather than humble by reason of their virtue; but they were not yet devoid of the fault of being respecters of persons. And in that base where Nimualë wielded much influence was a long and wide and flat hard surface called a “runway” now much used by huge airships filled with a gas called “helium,” for peacetime travel that much enriched the town of Stephenville, whereof the folk were grateful though much ashamed that their forefathers had consented to the building of that station, upon what erst had been rich farmland confiscated, for fuel-powered flying machines of war now forbidden by common consent among the fair-minded warriors of the age. However, the Secular Industrial Republics of Old Europe kept urging the government of Canada, “through the diplomatic process,” to allow the landing at Stephenville Airport, and at a limited number of other such sites, of fuel-powered flying machines bearing passengers and freight, but the federal government thus far had withstood that urging.

“Nimualë says the knowledge of the righteous way is in the minds of all who find it through meditation, even before they realize they know it, and it is not in the mind of ‘any God’ that can reveal it to them who must be the origin of their being,” one day said Radverg then nigh twelve.

“We all know Miss Bennett doesn’t know everything, don’t we?” said George. Radverg nodded. “Everything which exists must either be existence or receive existence. You may not comprehend that now, but you will, and if she can now, she will never be able to refute it. Tell her that. Anything that we can imagine not existing, when we know it well, receives existence. So there must be a being which is existence in order to confer it. That’s a good argument. If our first principles did not belong to someone, then it could not be true that things belong to those

who make them, for our first principles are not themselves Existence but are only eternal ideas.”

When Radverg repeated to his elder she-Nemesis – word for word, for his young memory was most exact, meseemed from things I heard of him say that need not telling here – the argument rehearsed above, she said only, “Oh, your father told you that. Don’t you ever think for yourself?”

“He’s teaching me to think. At least we don’t only *meditate*. We know thinking is worth effort.” And that argument also had Abbott Elder prepared for him aforesome some time past, but Miss Bennett had no prompt reply therefor. “Do Buddhists teach themselves to think, or meditate?”

“I have already learned my lessons well.”

“So will I. Dad promised. You ever hear him fail his promise?”

For Irene Barnable oft brought her young pupil in weapon-use to visit the Abbotts, and to practice swordplay with Radverg whom his father taught skillfully therein. She forebore to teach her faith unto that maiden, for that would be trespass on her parents’ right, except in giving honest answer to questions directly asked.

“Nimualë says sex is meant chiefly to express marital love as manifesting Buddhist non-duality with the Absolute,” remarked Radverg, at sixteen, to a boon companion. “She’s full of it – I don’t mean marital love or non-duality either. How do I convince her that marital love must be a shared desire to make children with each other in partnership with God the Maker? Jeepers, she’s some obtuse.”

“You could just grab her and.... When she was pregnant she might realize it.” The two boys laughed heartily, and Radverg said, “I don’t want children with her. But we argue like Mom and Dad. But I wouldn’t want children with a woman who didn’t want children. And she couldn’t

even feed them right. Titless wonder.”

“I hear some like that are witless thunders when you get them in the mood,” quoth his companion. And that was all that I was let wit thereto as of that converse. But about two weeks later, Radverg told his sire, “Nimualë said today that all animals must share in the dignity of non-duality with the Absolute, as much as we do, because humans breed like brutes to make more humans for our own share in non-duality. I know that notion of non-duality is horsedung, but it bothers me that we must be so much like lower animals in following mere instinct.”

““We’re not like mere animals in serving instinct,” George told his son. “The idea that instinct rightly rules us is a persistent hold-over from the Age of Evolutionist Education, I’m afraid. Intellect doesn’t copy instinct; instinct is a dim copy of intellect. We’re not like mere animals, only more so; the animals are like us, only less so. But there was a time, not long ago, when many women felt coition to be an ordeal, necessary for their having children. The coarseness of many lustful men probably had a lot to do with that. But often such women were depicted in books and theatre so as to associate desire for children and disgust for sex as being equally the traits of narrow-minded prudes. That did harm to the moral atmosphere of the time. For a long time now, though, the baby-making of men and women has been far more ceremonial and more nearly a firm ritual than it was in former times, to invoke God’s blessing on our desire for progeny to preserve our race so that right may continue to be made in matter. You’ll learn the ceremonial approach as you approach your own marriage, as your intended will learn it from her mother.

“The ceremony is as a framework wherein much liberty and initiative are available as one’s beloved may suggest. But a boy your age ought not to dwell on such. Time enough, time enough. Keep on swerving your mind away from sexual fantasy until reality itself seems to compel

desire, then reflect on your desire to weaken the power thereof. That's the remedy for weakness in normal men. I've read that some abnormal men ought rather to reflect on their desire to imagine being in coition, to dampen that. But always remember that venereal pleasure is not meant either as inducement or reward; it's the body's part of spiritual joy in doing what of all things is most right: trying to make for God good children, which is a privileged experience that outshines and outweighs all knowledge only fleshly. The real Circle of Life is every husband and wife making or growing for themselves, with minimal help from others, whatever they need to have children they can teach to grow and make things in order to have more children. That is the best possible imitation of God's own eternal Making, in which we actually share, because of our being baptized, by our imitating it."

"Dad, you're starting to repeat yourself."

"Men commonly need more often to be reminded than informed.' Normal males especially."

And then I had the last hearing I was granted of converse between Radverg and Nimualë while Radverg was a little beyond twenty years. Radverg was saying, meseemeth without any prompting afore by his father: "I can't believe Buddhists can be 'detached' from desire even for justice. Justice is what all must want; it makes sense that we ought to suffer when it's denied – not only when it's denied to us, but especially when its own nature is denied by any injustice."

"You poor Catholic male," quoth Nimualë. "Even justice can come only to those who are detached from all desire even for justice. You can't get anything by seeking it. 'All things come to him who waits.' You'll see. Some day. When you learn right meditation."

"Maybe someday I'll open your soul to truth. In which you don't yet believe, I'd wager. You Buddhists seem to believe a dozen self-contradictory notions before breakfast. Even God was willing to suffer and die because He wants justice. You ought to want justice so intensely you

share His own unconquerable anger when justice is denied and redress is unreachable. That is what can come of Christian meditation. Or else you can beg God to make you desire it that way when you ought. Not wanting justice is itself unjust. And it's simply not true that suffering is due to desire itself; the desire for justice wouldn't lead to any kind of pain even indirectly unless someone first wanted something unjustly."

"According to Christianity. Which isn't Buddhism. You'll see. Do you think those Buddhists who defended the unborn could have stood up unarmed to professional soldiers aiming deadly firearms if they'd wanted anything at all? When there were so few Christians desiring justice?"

"Not while they were Buddhist, they couldn't. Christians had endured worse before then. Those particular Christians hadn't been taught, for a long time, the clean elements of natural justice. They'd almost come to equate wrong with harm, as Buddhists seem to. Buddhists, I think, believe flesh and spirit are aspects of the same reality – or illusion, or both; whatever. But spirit and flesh are of different kinds of reality, the flesh being lower, so that when spiritual reality is 'damaged,' it's appropriate that flesh feel it, in us who are flesh and spirit joined. Soul and body aren't aspects of humans, but our parts; they're still real when separated. Mere aspects of things vanish when the things cease to be. So matter and spirit aren't mere aspects."

"Ain't Thomism grand? You should be a priest. You'd make an excellent Jesuit."

"Priests are ordained chiefly to offer family life to God in the Mass."

"Great excuse for staying horny."

He laughed. "I don't know enough about Thomism to confirm its greatness on my own authority. But I've often thought Buddhism could have been inspired by Satan. Getting people to do exactly right, but from sheer self-deceiving pride, would be the way he works."

"You'd know."

“Fairly well. As I was about to say, however. Saying the goal of life on earth is ‘enlightenment’ instead of saying you seek truth itself, seems significant. It sounds like amassing money without wanting to buy. Miserly.”

“You still need light to see that illusions are illusory. That’s all we can expect to have, when we learn not to want it.”

“Such ‘detachment’ looks to me like a cat’s stillness while hunting birds, except in your case the cats are fooling only themselves. I’ve even heard Buddhists say they’re humble and believe it themselves.”

“Why shouldn’t they?”

“Just as healthy people have better things to do than think about their health, so humble people have ‘more important’ things to think about than staying humble. That’s what keeps them humble.”

“How do you know? You’re humble, are you?”

“I’m not important enough for that question to matter much,” quoth Radverg with much mild smoothness, whereat both of them laughed gleefully.

But now meseemeth I must make short my tale whereof I have so far enjoyed recounting of detail in deed and dialogue, for I have been warned that evil wights have been made ware of my writing that is to be taken to Tellares when it is done, and those wights mean forestall its being sent unto that world so like to this, wherefrom exchange of written work is made at times with ours, by means angelic. And so I must forgo that fashion which is most fitting to that age wherein this manuscript is meant first to be brought to light upon our Tellus, and must resort unto the mode which is more favoured in this our present age. I must therefore pass over Radverg’s gaining of much lore anent the nature of men’s motives from study and talk in school



of what will come to be called the Greek and Latin classics, and his gaining of martial lore, which boded well to have stood him in good stead should he have to deal in warfare, from much discussion, in his later youth, with his Aunt Irene and her pupil Nimualë.

## CHAPTER 7

Now, when Radverg Abbott was but a little beyond age of twenty-one, for he had been born early in October while vocation as teacher kept his father home, he went an autumn afternoon, as oft he had gone erst, upon the hill that hight Pine Tree Mountain, for to set some traps, most cunningly devised, for rabbits, since law that time forbade mere snaring as using the rabbits' own struggling for to slay them. And he went upon that hill more far than usually erst, and he saw where had not been last time a small hut and an awning whereunder sat a man who looked old, about whom another scribe more worthy belike hath told and hath rehearsed the outward show of his person.

"Hail, Radverg Abbott, come in good time to read good book."

"I've read the Bible, Sir," said Radverg.

"Not the good book, but a good book, I mean," quoth gaffer sort that Radverg took to be holy hermit.

"I like good books," said Radverg then.

But Radverg was sore amazed and marvelled much at that book whereto the hermit led him in his hut that seemed of far more room within than it had seemed when he was without. For the book that lay upon a walnut stand upon a slant which suited Radverg's reading perfectly when he sat where hermit signed, told the very tale that here is being told. And when Radverg had read unto this very point, the hermit bade him cease his reading for the nonce.

"Magic is forbidden by the Church!" he shouted at the hermit, standing from the chair.

"Black magic is universally forbidden," said the hermit. "The Church has not so much to say, these days at least, anent white magic."

"I have heard that true white magic has been impracticable since the days of the Elder

Brothers.”

“Even so. The last worthy practitioner left for the true west at the beginning of the Third Age, is that not true? You may call me Palmer Snowclad,” he added as if in afterthought.

Radverg sank to his knees. “Great God in Heaven,” the youth breathed out, “what are you here to tell us?”

“It was told in the tale. Did it not sink in yet? You are an heir of Arthur, the second born in Newfoundland and ablinks the last to be granted her.”

“I? My God, the book did say that, didn’t it? I was so overwhelmed at its dealing with me at all ... What must I do, Master Snowclad?”

“See to the traps you set last evening, go home, keep quiet about all this, and ponder much in your heart.” And then Master Snowclad allowed young Radverg, which reminded him he was young indeed, to read thus far again in the tale being told. But before they parted, the master fed him cakes and ale. “Good cakes, good ale, too” said Radverg when he finished. He was able to laugh heartily when the master further showed him this part.

The next time they met upon the mountain, Radverg read from within the book, what was not largely known but mostly to scholars given unto what some men would have called a “hidden agenda,” that many centuries had passed between an age that had been much like the one wherein lived and fought the hero Elias Crane, and the current age whereof men knew. That current age had been made much like the earlier one by an arrangement of demons working on minds of men to “remedy” what the demons deemed errors they had not been able to prevent in that lost age, wherein had been no successful heir of Arthur. This tale had come to light in that lost age, so said the book, but had been suppressed again.

After Radverg had met several times with Palmer Snowclad upon Pine Tree, the old but lively-

seeming hermit bade him one day to uproot, with much good soil around the roots, a small and lively-seeming tree from where it grew anigh door of hut and to westward of door. And he bade him go down a certain path to mouth of tunnel that issued out near “Shrine of Elias” and there to plant anew that small tree, to westward of tunnel mouth and anear side thereof. (The Palmer said in any of his discoursing the words “Shrine of Elias” without word “saint” therein, whereof Radverrg took notice without speaking anent. For Elias Crane was never canonized.) And thence, said Palmer Snowclad, young Radverrg was to go down another path, that led to Point au Mal, where he would “meet your destiny or large part thereof.” And on that path, that led past a castle the ‘Mawlers’ then were building, with great thick walls for to hem in their great happiness – as a most worthy scribe, from a time that by then will be most ancient, will have written anent men of our present age or ablings a recent one – he met a damsel fair and meseemed that each likewise saw that each liked other’s looks, and that each was likewise quietly according approval thereto in a manner meaning that both would be quietly content therewith but that both had had prudent counsel of Palmer Snowclad thereanent. Her name was Helena O’Toole. They fell to fair and playful converse, and they had light lunch with her parents from Point au Mal, whereat their parish priest was present. And that priest, hight Father Aidan Oakwynn, asked whether Radverrg had interest in Revealed Doctrine anent God’s Nature, and Radverrg said it was not permitted him. But Father Aidan said such discourse was forbidden, by the Canadian Bishops, without the borders of Point au Mal but not within those borders, for “We Mawlers have had dispensation of the Pope, for to preserve civil and religious peace in Canada.” And the priest showed Radverrg the decree of dispensation. He had been told such pact had been made among the Canadian Bishops for to strengthen knowledge of God as Maker of all else and avoid confusion of Christians anent the Buddhist doctrine of non-duality that said all things were but

aspects of the Absolute which is itself not personal. Their discourse anent the Trinity prompted Radverg to reason that man is most like God not in his making other things but rather in his generating progeny and his guiding the generation of the lower animals and of plants, and that it was not wholly accurate to speak of “making” babies. “Generation is necessary to God’s life,” quoth Radverg, “but his making isn’t necessary to him at all. It’s ‘only’ an act of mercy allowing others to share his justice.” And so he saw then that “Mawlers” were right to forbid that miscalled “generation” of energy from the inanimate which must therefore be a mockery of action by alive. He said: “Trusting your movingness to an ‘automotive’ vehicle, other than such as work upon electricity produced as by the rowing in the Bullet, is like binding yourself comfortably to a comfortable cross.” And he got permission in later months to bring his father to converse with Father Aidan anent the doctrine he now had learned. And George Abbott was much wroth that the Bishops had denied him this lore anent man’s true nobility, and he could not forbear to discourse thereof with some he trusted in his own home. And some of such discourse was heard by son of Gerald Bourgeois, and he and Gerald Esquire schemed to gain the Abbott land and dwelling, for to keep it or to sell, by talebearing thereof to the authorities, among whom then was Nimualë Bennett and Nimualë thought she saw therein great opportunity.

However, those schemers went by “taxi-cab” to Corner Brook for to bear their tale to Bishop, and the “driver” overheard their own discourse, for they were not enow discreet. And that “driver” was Patrick O’Gorman, that had brought Radverg home as tale first told. And O’Gorman warned George Abbott, and for reward George offered sell to him the land and house for money whereof part might be paid later, and thus the plot against the Abbotts was in part forestalled, for, after that sale right speedy, George and Ruth and their whole family fled unto Point au Mal to dwell at the home of the O’Tooles, who made them right welcome, for the

O'Tooles knew from the Palmer that now the destiny of Point au Mal was near at hand. And that was three years after Radverg first saw the Palmer. And in the passing of the time thereof Radverg and Helena had wedded and been well bedded with much ceremony suitable, after Radverg had learned from Duke O'Toole much martial lore both modern and what they then called "medieval." And during that time also they had invited Lieutenant Barnable to Point au Mal and made her ware of lack of lore to laity, and she resigned her office in the military and went to live with George and Ruth in new-built house.

Now, at the end of the fourth year of Radverg's acquaintance with the Palmer, Father Aidan had a secret message from a minor official of the National Council of Catholic Bishops of Canada that said the Bishops' real reason for suppressing lay learning anent the Trinity had been to "level the playing field" in fashion "ecumenical" between Buddhistry and Christendom by forbearing to teach the heathen how near a man might approach to being "assimilated unto the Absolute" while yet remaining himself, which the Bishops deemed a teaching that ought most attract a Buddhist unto Catholicism. And Father Aidan was much wrathful, and he showed Radverg a decree made by the Pope, that bore the Pope's own seal most unmistakable, that made him Archbishop of Newfoundland "in pectore" and bade him make it known when he deemed best. And Bishop Aidan declared himself unto all the Catholics of Newfoundland and roundly denounced the National Council of Catholic Bishops of Canada, wherein he made use of ways to make things known which yet astonie me, though I have seen much thereof in the visions granted me. And the Bishops declared that all the Traditional enclaves throughout Canada, that had been preserved by the Buddhist Compromise, should be suppressed by the State. And war was declared, to be waged indeed unless all the Traditional did homage anew unto the Bishops and unto them swore strict obedience. And all the Traditional proclaimed defiance, all across the

land. And George Abbott read that evening to Radverg and Helena and others to him close the second of those old tales anent knights named Radverg which he had enjoyed as a boy, which second tale he had erst withheld as fain to foster overmuch a sharp sympathy for the Traditionals, whereto he had deemed young Radverg already overmuch inclined. And it had presented similarities to their own situation but also sentiments not suited unto true chivalry, such as an implied approval of women's setting animals for to fight men or women-warriors themselves unchivalrous. George's own sympathies had since then changed much, as hath been rehearsed. And now that dread danger was most nigh, fortitude ought most be fostered, said Radverg's father.

Nimualë Bennett, captain of the armed forces in Stephenville, was ordered to make first example of the Traditional of Point au Mal, before war became general in the country, for that the men (and women) of Point au Mal were "instigators of revolt." And thereupon Captain Bennet led armoured cars and vehicles called "tanks" from the army base in Stephenville and through Kippens and across the bridge over Romaines Brook and toward base of hill whereat road turned north to go around that hill and up its side to fulfill almost three-quarters of a circle at least upon the flat page of a map and join Main Road where it roughly went southeast to form a "dead end" at top of hill itself, whereat was upon each side of road a goodly house. For that road turning around the eastward end of upper ground whereon Port au Port East abode near Pine Tree was the way unto that wide and high tunnel leading unto the "Shrine of St. Elias" from anear the Church of St. Vincent de Paul in Point au Mal District. For each generation of Traditionals since the tunnel's first forming had vowed never to block it but with bodies of armed men, and it offered best access to Point au Mal unless by sea.

Now, the plan of force from Stephenville went much amiss from easy conquest of the

Mawlers that Captain Nimuale felt foregone. For a high official, who was a layman, of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops had falsely declared unto the Captain General of the Armed Forces of Canada that Bishop of each diocese had “granted dispensation” to the military therein from the moral obligation to fight fairly for justice, since this was a “dire emergency” for the “Canadian Church,” and the colonel commandant of the base at Stephenville, who had grown accustomed to peaceful ease, had welcomed that dastardy, in especial since he himself was quarantined with grave illness and might not face brave death in company with his soldiers. But many of his soldiers secretly informed of this their friends among the farmers and fishers of Port au Port who the soldiers knew were hunters with firearms of a beast called moose whereof they much enjoyed roast flesh. And men gathered from throughout the Peninsula of Port au Port for to compel the soliders to fight fair for entry to “Tunnel of St. Elias.”

When the armed force set out from Stephenville, the Palmer brought Radverg to that tree that he had bidden him replant near mouth of “Tunnel to Shrine,” and bade him cut it down. And Radverg found then, as Arthur Drake had elsewhere found centuries afore, a sword grown inside the tree, but this sword was straight, but Snowclad told Radverg it was the self-same sword made more suitable for knight, and the Palmer knighted him therewith, and told him which edge of the sword, as shown by a sigil on the rightward side of the blade, was for healing and which for cutting. And the Palmer said that in the coming battle that sword could wreak much havoc upon metal combat-car when their foes would try to take the tunnel that led to Point au Mal.

Now upon that hill of Port au Port East that was west of Romaines Brook, whereunder the military force from Stephenville must wend, Duke O’Toole secretly made well aforetime foison of ballistas and catapults, so that as the line of vehicles approached along the road, he let fly a “warning shot” that smashed the cannon of a “tank” in the line’s middle, and then, through a



“loud hailer,” he warned his foes that missiles of burning oil awaited if they should persist in depending upon their armoured vehicles. And then, the “Marksmen of the Farthest West,” as later tales would dub them, “opened warning fire,” as men then will say. And then Captain Bennett bethought her that, sithen combat fair could not then easily be avoided, it were as well to rely on weapons starkly needing wielding by hand of man such as Traditionals favoured and deemed them obliged to use, for each of her soldiers was equipped with such as matter of course always, save that theirs were what that age will call “police batons.” And she got speedily consent, by word through device called “radio,” from colonel commandant so to proceed, for he had repented of his dastardy but had been unwilling to reverse first order, though he had been near ready to defy what he deemed the Bishops’ exceeding their authority in presuming to overrule natural moral law. And the Marksmen of the West had brought with them much foison of axehandles, for that they had had some deal of faith in the probity of friends among the soldiers. And so the two sides fell to fighting. And therefrom my vision was much confused of the wax and wane of the fortunes of each side, wherein Irene Barnable gave good rede unto Duke O’Toole, save that the combat went fast and fierce, with fury nigh on frolicsome yet a full fury, sithen each side deemed other grave in error and each deemed opposing such error worth much undertaking and eke much undergoing. So many bones were broken and some men were outright slain in much equal contention bodily, until Lady Helena Abbott, who had thereto got rede from Master Snowclad, met face to face with Captain Bennett and with her fought hand to hand in unarmed combat until Helena Abbott felled her, wherefrom she felt no great disgrace sithen Helena was of great prowess proven then, and then the lady Helena did quickly manacle the captain. And then Sir Radverg slew with his swift sword the captain’s long-lived familiar Bhutofel that sought savagely to slay the lady Helena. And when the captain’s host was made

aware that she was taken, it lost heart briefly but enough and failed recover to advantage fast, whereof the Mawler force took great profit for to prevail. And after the battle, Radverg with his sword wrought much healing among wounded friends and foes, even to sealing, at new rede of Snowclad, some skull breakings not yet mortal, wherefore many foes were speedily converted.

While the wounded were tended and the dead laid in stretchers for bearing home for funerals, Sir Radverg brought Nimualë to the Palmer and the wise hermit showed unto her the book that telleth of these things, and then she read so far as to the outcome of the combat and then she stopped and laughed, though somewhat bitterly at first but then with haler merriment and in that latter laughter was her soul largely healed, so that she made acceptance within of Christ the Saviour and was resolved to be baptized upon the first occasion fitting. And the Palmer let her read that, and so she laughed the more, but read no more therein, not even this.

And when the news of this first battle went throughout all Canada, transmitted by those means whereat I still find me most astonied, the forces of the government did largely rebel, that the Bishops called a mutiny, and the Traditionals prevailed through almost all the land at first and later wholly and the People of Canada established in their vast country divers kingdoms, of which the chiefest were Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, the French, the Middle, and the West, all ruled by men known then to be heirs of Arthur, of whom all looked much alike, save for the kingdom French, that had for to rule it well an heir of Royal St. Louis. And Radverg ruled from his castle on Pine Tree, and Palmer Snowclad left again for the True West, and then began much visiting, between Port au Port and Elfland, of Radverg and his queen and of Remuentuacael Half-Elven, Lord of Elvish realm hight April-Ever-Autumn, of whom a tale hath told that was first rehearsed about the time that this history itself first came to light in Newfoundland. And Patrick O’Gorman insisted that he sell back unto George Abbott the land and dwelling he had bought

therefrom, saying that it had been his wish that he might so do, for fair land and house belonged to them that had lived thereon and lived therefrom. And therefore George Abbott made exchange with O’Gorman, for to give him the new house George had had built in Point au Mal. And Irene Barnable wed O’Gorman and dwelled with him therein, and she was much admired and liked in Point au Mal, for her great aid in battle that she had given from her training in the national armed forces, wherefor no one in those forces with whom she spoke anent her reasons would ever call her traitor.

Now one night as he lay sleeping beside Queen Helena who was by then with child, King Radverg had a dream wherein a Child asked whether he wished keep the sword found in the tree or to have brought to him for his own, by way of an exchange, the sword Excalibur from where it stood as told in the book by scholar Sanders Anne Laubenthal, and so become High King of all Canada. And in the dream he chose the sword that he had wielded, leaving Excalibur for England’s own heir of Arthur, and he dreamed that the Child said to him, “Well chosen” and then vanished. And he woke, and himseemed he saw in thought the minds of three great dragons. And the dragons’ bodies were of lightning-force, informed compact by mighty souls, and they had just awaked in far Cathay and come at once to Newfoundland. For the true dragonkind then will have not heavier kind of body unless they fall from grace in far Cathay. And the dragons sent thought to him that a mighty airship fleet fuel-powered was flying from the Secular Industrial Republics of Old Europe, for to conquer Christian Canada and keep from their own people knowledge that a non-industrial country could truly prosper well, but those dragons would destroy that fleet before it could do harm, and they foretold eke that the fleet’s destruction would lead to Europe’s reconversion and the restoration of Arthur’s rule in England. And so it all befell. And those three dragons did offer to nullify all advantage that Choosists in Canada might

gain by unfair “weapons escalation” and beyond that offer I have not Seen, though the High have assured me that the reign of Arthur’s Heirs will endure in peace for many scores of years after Radverg Abbott first sits upon his throne in Newfoundland at last its own kingdom of fishermen and farmers.