



TRANSCRIPTS FOR JULY 2019

GAMES FROM FOLKTALES

MAN - THE WITCH OF SLIEU WALLIAN
THE CURIOUS LORE OF PRECIOUS STONES 2
JACK THE GIANT KILLER: WELSH ADVENTURES
DUNSANY: THE CHRONICLES OF SHADOW VALLEY 1

An experiment in podcasting for the
Ars Magica roleplaying game

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CURIOUS LORE OF PRECIOUS STONES 2

Episode 202 was so overwhelming I've decided to cut the material from Kunz's "Curious Lore of Precious Stones" into many small pieces. Each has three or four types of gemstone. The first episode contains plot hooks which suit all stones – this one only those which suit each particular stone.

AGATE

Kunz notes :

The author of "Lithica" celebrates the merits of the agate in the following lines:

*Adorned with this, thou woman's heart shall gain,
And by persuasion thy desire obtain;
And if of men thou aught demand, shalt come
With all thy wish fulfilled rejoicing home.*

This idea is elaborated by Marbodius, Bishop of Rennes, in the eleventh century, who declares that agates make the wearers agreeable and persuasive and also give them the favor of God. Still other virtues are recounted by Camillo Leonardo, who claims that these stones give victory and strength to their owners and avert tempests and lightning.

The agate possessed some wonderful virtues, for its wearer was guarded from all dangers, was enabled to vanquish all terrestrial obstacles and was endowed with a bold heart; this latter prerogative was presumably the secret of his success. Some of these wonder-working agates were black with white veins, while others again were entirely white.

The wearing of agate ornaments was even believed to be a cure for insomnia and was thought to insure pleasant dreams. In spite of these supposed advantages, Cardano asserts that while wearing this stone he had many misfortunes which he could not trace to any fault or error of his own. He, therefore, abandoned its use; although he states that it made the wearer more prudent in his actions...In another treatise this author takes a somewhat more favorable view of the agate, and proclaims that all varieties render those who wear them "temperate, continent, and cautious; therefore they are all useful for acquiring riches."

About the middle of the past century, the demand for agate amulets was so great in the Soudan that the extensive agate-cutting establishments at Idar and Oberstein in Germany were almost exclusively busied with filling orders for this trade. Brown or black agates having a white ring in the centre were chiefly used for the fabrication of these amulets, the white ring being regarded as a symbol of the eye.

A man in armor, with bow and arrow, on an iris stone, protects from evil both the wearer and the place where it may be.

Camillo Leonardo says that its many different varieties had as many different virtues, and he finds in this an explanation of the multiplicity of images engraved on the various kinds of agate, without realizing that the true reason was that this material lent itself more readily to artistic treatment than did many others.

Agates turn up in deposits in many areas of volcanic activity. In Mythic Europe, the best agates are cut in Oberstein (ruled by the literal "Lords of Stone") in an area that might be in the Rhine Tribunal, but which I think I claimed for the Greater Alps in Sanctuary of Ice. The Lords of Stone are the ancestors of the Counts of Falkenstein, and I recall mentioning them, because there is an old roleplaying game of that name. Jasper and rock crystal are also found in abundance here. This town is, in the real world, now called Idar-Oberstein.

In Ars 5th edition, agate has the following material bonuses: : air 3, protection from storms 5, protection from venom 7. I'd suggest as additions, +3 bonuses for being convincing, luck, courage and dreams.

AMBER

For the ancient Greek poets, the grains of amber were the tears annually shed over the death of their brother Phaëthon by the Heliades after grief had metamorphosed them into poplars growing on the banks of the Eridanus (the modern river Po). In a lost tragedy of Sophocles, he saw the origin of amber in the tears shed over the death of Meleager by certain Indian birds. For Nicias it was the "juice" or essence of the brilliant rays of the setting sun, congealed in the sea and then cast up upon the shore. A more prosaic explanation likened amber to resin, and regarded it as being an exudation from the trunks of certain trees. Another fancy represented amber to be the solidified urine of the lynx, hence one of its names, lyncurius.

The brilliant and beautiful yellow of certain ambers and the fact that this material was very easily worked served to make its use more general, and it soon became a favorite object of trade and barter between the peoples of the Baltic Coast and the more civilized peoples to the south. Schliemann found considerable amber from the Baltic in the graves of Mycenæ, and the frequent allusions to it in the works of Latin authors of the first and succeeding centuries testify to its popularity in the Roman world.

Probably the very earliest allusion in literature to the ornamental use of amber appears in Homer's Odyssey, where we read: Eurymachus Received a golden necklace, richly wrought, And set with amber beads, that glowed as if With sunshine. To Eurydamas there came A pair of ear-rings, each a triple gem, Daintily fashioned and of exquisite grace. Two servants bore them.

Amber ingeniously carved into animal forms has been discovered in tumuli at Indersoen, Norway. These curious objects were worn as amulets, and the peculiar forms were supposed to enhance the power of the material, giving it special virtues and rendering it of greater value and efficacy.

Pieces of amber with singular natural markings were greatly esteemed, especially when these markings suggested the initials of the name of some prominent person. Thus, we are told that Friedrich Wilhelm I of Prussia paid to a dealer a high price for a piece of amber on which appeared his initials. The same dealer had another piece on which he read the initials of Charles XII of Sweden. When he received the news of this king's death, he bitterly lamented having lost the opportunity of selling him amber for a high price. But he was cleverly consoled by Nathaniel Sendal, the relator of the story, who easily persuaded the dealer that the markings could just as well signify the initials of some other name. Sendal adduces this as a proof that the letters read on such pieces of amber were as much the product of the observer's imagination as of the markings of the material.

I'd note that there are also folktales which say that a faerie princess's castle under the Baltic Sea was wrecked, and the pieces washed up on the shore. Amber is traded through much of Europe, and found in other places: the Tremere have a source, for example.

Ars Magica 5th edition gives the material bonuses of Amber as Corpus +3 and Controlling movement +3. I'd suggest sunlight, animals modelled in the amber, persons whose names are modelled in the amber, trade, controlling Baltic faeries +3.

AMETHYST

While the special and traditional virtue of the amethyst was the cure of drunkenness, many other qualities were attributed to this stone in the fifteenth century. For Leonardo, it had the power to control evil thoughts, to quicken the intelligence, and to render men shrewd in business matters. An amethyst worn on the person had a sobering effect, not only upon those who had partaken too freely of the cup that intoxicates, but also upon those over-excited by the love-passion. Lastly, it preserved soldiers from harm and gave them victory over their enemies, and was of great assistance to hunters in the capture of wild animals. The amethyst shared with many other stones the power to preserve the wearer from contagion.

A bear, if engraved on an amethyst, has the virtue of putting demons to flight and defends and preserves the wearer from drunkenness.

Amethyst: hearing 2, wealth and mercantile 2, dreams 3, poisons 3, versus poison, temperance 4, drunkenness 7, versus drunkenness 7. Violet Amethyst: ascendancy over masses 4, versus drunkenness 7

Additions suggested: bargaining, hunting, bravery +3

BERYL

Arnoldus Saxo, writing about 1220, after reciting the virtues of the beryl as given by Marbodius, after Evax and Isidorus, reports in addition that the stone gave help against foes in battle or in litigation; the wearer was rendered unconquerable and at the same time amiable, while his intellect was quickened and he was cured of laziness. In the old German translation of Thomas de Cantimpré's "De Proprietatibus Rerum," we read that the beryl reawakens the love of married people.

A frog, engraved on a beryl, will have the power to reconcile enemies and produce friendship where there was discord. A hoopoe with a tarragon herb before it, represented on a beryl, confers the power to invoke water-spirits and to converse with them, as well as to call up the mighty dead and to obtain answers to questions addressed to them.

Beryls are found in many places in Europe: Austria, Germany, Ireland, Norway, Russia and Sweden.

Aquamarine water +3. Beryl water +3, Chrysoberyl (Cat's eye) versus malign corpus +3
Suggested additions: controlling lawyers 3. Note the particularly useful engravings.

BLOODSTONE

Bloodstones are, chemically, a sort of quartz, so they are usually a jasper. They have little red inclusions which reflect light, giving the names of heliotrope and bloodstone. The main source near Mythic Europe is Armenia. Wikipedia mentions a source in Scotland, but I'm not sure if it was used in 1220.

The heliotrope or bloodstone was supposed to impart a reddish hue to the water in which it was placed, so that when the rays of the sun fell upon the water they gave forth red reflections. From this fancy was developed the strange exaggeration that this stone had the power to turn the sun itself a blood-red, and to cause thunder, lightning, rain, and tempest. The old treatise of Damigeron relates this of the bloodstone, adding that it announced future events by producing rain and by "audible oracles."

Damigeron also declares that the bloodstone preserved the faculties and bodily health of the wearer, brought him consideration and respect, and guarded him from deception.

A bat, represented on a heliotrope or bloodstone, gives the wearer power over demons and helps incantations.

In the Leyden papyrus the bloodstone is praised as an amulet in the following extravagant terms: The world has no greater thing; if any one have this with him he will be given whatever he asks for; it also assuages the wrath of kings and despots, and whatever the wearer says will be believed. Whoever bears this stone, which is a gem, and pronounces the name engraved upon it, will find all doors open, while bonds and stone walls will be rent asunder.

A historical instance of the use of the bloodstone to check a hemorrhage is recorded in the case of Giorgio Vasari (1514-1578), the author of the lives of the Italian painters of the Renaissance period. On a certain occasion, when the painter Luca Signorelli (1439-1521) was placing one of his pictures in a church at Arezzo, Vasari, who was present, was seized with a violent hemorrhage and fainted away. Without a moment's hesitation, Signorelli took from his pocket a bloodstone amulet and slipped it down between Vasari's shoulder-blades. The hemorrhage is said to have ceased immediately.

Robert Boyle, in his "Essay about the Origin and Virtues of Gems" (London, 1672, pp. 177-78), tells of a gentleman of his acquaintance who was "of a complexion extraordinary sanguin," and was much afflicted with bleeding of the nose. A gentlewoman sent to him a bloodstone, directing him to wear it suspended from his neck, and from the time he put it on he was no longer troubled with his malady. It recurred, however, if he removed the stone. When Boyle objected that this might be a result of imagination, his friend disposed of his objection by relating the instance of a woman to whom the stone had been applied when she was unconscious from loss of blood. Nevertheless, as soon as it touched her, the flow of blood was checked. Boyle states that this stone did not seem to him to resemble a true bloodstone. It may have been that the cold of the stone congealed the blood, or that the flow was checked by exhaustion.

Kunz does not mention that bloodstones are mentioned by Pliny as causing invisibility. This is widely known: in the Decameron the stone has the same use.

Currently: Blood and wounds +4, but I'd suggest it should be higher. I'd suggest an addition of invisibility +7, controlling weather +3, controlling noblemen +3. Note the useful engravings, however: a demon with a high rank in Hell counts as a nobleman.

JACK THE GIANT KILLER: WELSH ADVENTURES

This week, an extract from English Fairy Tales that calls back to a previous episode from the Cornish series. The tales of Jack the Giant-killer that I'm familiar with come from Cornwall so they deal with his early career and his retirement after he becomes a Knight of the Round Table, but it turns out that in several tellings there's an extensive period where he goes to Wales, wields various magic items that he tricks out of the possession of his magician-giant uncle, then becomes a Knight of the Round Table and retires. For the Cornish material I am getting together we need to know what these magic items are, and where the player characters might wish to seek them, and if they find them what they can use them for.

This version was originally written by Ernest and Grace Rhys and was recorded into the public domain by Steven Wilson through LibriVox. I was originally attempted to cut out the Cornish material from Steven's recording. I'm going to leave it in because it's only about six minutes long, we last dealt with it over a year ago, and in this retelling Jack's virtues, flaws, and abilities are suitably different from the previous one that we can find new plot hooks.

Thanks to Steven and the whole production team at LibriVox.

In the reign of King Arthur, there lived in the county of Cornwall, near the Land's End of England, a wealthy farmer who had one only son called Jack. He was brisk and of a ready lively wit, so that whatever he could not perform by force and strength, he did by his quick wit and cleverness. Never was any person heard of that could worst him, and he very often even baffled wise men by his sharp and ready invention.

Notice that in this version Jack has a high Intelligence or Perception score, as opposed to some versions, where he's a sort of holy fool and has the Luck Virtue. This is important if, for example, he's an ancestor of one of your characters, from whom your character gets Mythic Blood.

In those days the Mount of Cornwall was kept by a huge and monstrous giant of eighteen feet in height, and about three yards in girth, of a fierce and grim face, the terror of all the towns and villages near.

For clarification, that's Mont Saint Michael in Cornwall.

He lived in a cave in the midst of the mount, and would not suffer any one else to live near him. His food was other men's cattle, which often became his prey, for whensoever he wanted food he would wade over to the mainland, where he would furnish himself with whatever came in his way. The good folk, at his approach, forsook their homes, while he seized on their cattle, making nothing of carrying half-a-dozen oxen on his back at a time; and as for their sheep and hogs, he would tie them round his waist like a bunch of bandeliers. This course he had followed for many years, so that all Cornwall had become poor through his robberies.

This leads to the suggestion that this is a Faerie rather than a Magical giant: feeding on the despair his depredations cause: a vampire on a whole kingdom rather than an individual neck.

One day Jack, happening to be present at the town hall when the magistrates were sitting in council about the giant, asked what reward would be given to the person who destroyed him. The giant's treasure, they said, was the reward.

This is less parsimonious than it appears. In somewhat later English law, is something has been lost, it belongs to the finder, but if something has been hidden, then it belongs to the Crown when found. In the time of King John, the Coroner would get together a gang of knights and round you up for stealing from the King, which is treason, if you found a treasure trove and did not surrender it. So, giving him the treasure is actually a payment, under that law.

Quoth Jack, “* Then let me undertake it.”* So he took a horn, shovel, and pickaxe, and went over to the Mount in the beginning of a dark winter’s evening, when he fell to work, and before morning had dug a pit twenty-two feet deep, and nearly as broad, covering it over with long sticks and straw. Then strewing a little mould upon it, it appeared like plain ground. This done, Jack placed himself on the contrary side of the pit, farthest from the giant’s lodging, and, just at the break of day, he put the horn to his mouth, and blew, Tantivy, Tantivy.

The unexpected noise aroused the giant, who rushed from his cave, crying : “ You bold villain, are you come here to disturb my rest ^ You shall pay dearly for this. Satisfaction I will have, and this it shall be, I will take you whole and broil you for breakfast,” which he had no sooner uttered, than tumbling into the pit, he made the very foundations of the Mount to shake.

“Oh, giant,” quoth Jack, “ where are you now “Oh faith, you are gotten now into Lob’s Pound, where I will surely plague you for your wicked words : what do you think now of broiling me for your breakfast < Will no other diet serve you but poor Jack? ” Thus having teased the giant for a while, he gave him a most weighty knock with his pickaxe on the very crown of his head, and killed him on the spot. This done, Jack filled up the pit with earth, and went to search the cave, which he found contained much treasure. When the magistrates heard of this, they said he should henceforth be called Jack the Giant-killer, and gave him a sword and an embroidered belt, on which were written these words in letters of gold — *’ Here’s the right valiant Cornishman, Who slew the giant Cormelian’

Note that the giant is named **Cormelian? Corneius, or Cornelius** was a variant of the name of the human general who slew the giants in an earlier version of the story. He was given **Cornwall** for his demense. Perhaps the names of the combatants have become tangled.

The news of Jack’s victory soon spread over all the West of England, so that another giant, named Blunderbore, hearing of it, vowed to be revenged on the little hero, if ever it was his fortune to light on him. This giant was the lord of an enchanted castle standing in the midst of a lone- some wood. Now Jack, about four months afterwards, walking near this wood in his journey to Wales, being weary, seated himself near a pleasant fountain and fell fast asleep.

We’ve met Blunderbore before: he appears in Epsidoe 57 of Games from Folktales, in the Tom of Lelant story. Tom’s an ancestral figure for many people of the district. Rather than assuming these are variants of one tale, we might suggest that the giant turns up every few generations to become part of the foundation myth of a new family. His castle makes for a good covenant site, as mentioned in the earlier episode, because it has a shallow tin deposit, is mystically shrouded, has a trove of treasure, and is magical enough to provoke the interest of the Lord of Pengerswick.

While he was enjoying his repose, the giant, coming for water, there found him, and knew him to be the far-famed Jack by the lines written on the belt. Without ado, he took Jack on his shoulders and carried him towards his enchanted castle.

Now, as they passed through a thicket, the rustling of the boughs awakened Jack, who was strangely surprised to find himself in the clutches of the giant. His terror was not yet begun, for on entering the castle, he saw the ground strewn with human bones, the giant telling him his own would ere long be there also. After this the giant locked poor Jack in an immense chamber, leaving him there while he went to fetch another giant living in the same wood to help him to put an end to Jack. While he was gone, dreadful shrieks and cries affrighted Jack, especially a voice which said many times — “* Do what you can to get away, Or you’ll become the giant’s prey ; He’s gone to fetch his brother, who Will kill, likewise devour you too.”

If that’s not just a piece of faerie set dressing, that’s a ghost. It has a duty to warn and presumably rests when the giant dies. It might make a guard for a covenant here.

This dreadful noise had almost distracted Jack, who, going to the window, beheld afar off the two giants coming towards the castle. “* Now,” quoth Jack to himself, my death or my escape is at hand.” Now, there were strong cords in a corner of the room in which Jack was, and two of these he took, and made a strong noose at the end ; and while the giants were unlocking the iron gate of the castle he threw the ropes over each of their heads. Then drawing the other ends across a beam, and pulling with all his might, he throttled them. Then, seeing they were black in the face, and sliding down the rope, he came to their heads, when they could not defend themselves, and drawing his sword, slew them both.

Then, taking the giant’s keys, and unlocking the rooms, he found three fair ladies tied by the hair of their heads, almost starved to death. “Sweet ladies,” quoth Jack, I have killed this monster and his brutish brother, and so set you free.” This said, he gave them the keys, and so went on his journey to Wales.

...and there they vanish from the story. In the Tom of Lelant story, the lady he saves becomes his bride, and the ancestress of the local family.

Having but little money, Jack found it well to make the best of his way by travelling as fast as he could, but losing his road, he was benighted, and could not get a place to rest in until, coming into a narrow valley, he found a large house, and by reason of his present needs took courage to knock at the gate. But what was his surprise when there came forth a monstrous giant with two heads ; yet he did not appear so fiery as the others were, for he was a Welsh giant, and what he did was by private and secret malice under the false show of friendship.

So Cornish giants are aggressive and Welsh giants are sneaky. If you have giant blood, this may affect your virtues and abilities.

Jack, having told his state to the giant, was shown into a bedroom, where, in the dead of night, he heard his host muttering — “* Though here you lodge with me this night. You shall not see the morning light : My club shall dash your brains outright ! “

“Say’st thou so” quoth Jack “that is like one of your Welsh tricks, yet I hope to be cunning enough for you.” Then, getting out of bed, he laid a billet of wood in the bed in his stead, and hid himself in a corner of the room. At the dead time of the night in came the Welsh giant, who struck several heavy blows on the bed with his club, thinking he had broken every bone in Jack’s skin.

The next morning Jack, laughing in his sleeve, gave him hearty thanks for his night’s lodging. “How have you rested?” quoth the giant “did you not feel anything in the night?”

“No,” quoth Jack, “nothing but a rat, which gave me two or three slaps with her tail.”

With that, greatly wondering, the giant led Jack to breakfast, bringing him a bowl containing four gallons of hasty pudding. Being loath to let the giant think it too much for him. Jack put a large leather bag under his loose coat, in such a way that he could convey the pudding into it without its being seen.

A note to our American friends. Apparently a pudding, according to Alton Brown, is some sort of sweetened cornflour mixture in your country. In Australia, its anything served in the dessert course, but particularly anything that’s been boiled in a skin. Hasty pudding could be several things. A later meaning is similar to what we now call porridge – boiled oatmeal. Before that it was wheat flour boiled in milk, so it’s similar to cream of wheat. Butter and spices are sometimes added.

Then, telling the giant he would show him a trick, taking a knife. Jack ripped open the bag, and out came all the hasty pudding. Whereupon, saying, “Odds splutters, hur can do that trick hurself,” the monster took the knife, and ripping open his body, fell down dead.

And this is the application of a Traditional Ward.

Now, it fell in these days that King Arthur’s only son begged his father to give him a large sum of money, in order that he might go and seek his fortune in the country of Wales, where lived a beautiful lady possessed with seven evil spirits The king did his best to persuade his son from it, but in vain ; so at last granted the request, and the prince set out with two horses, one loaded with money, the other for himself to ride upon.

Now, after several days’ travel, he came to a market-town in Wales, where he beheld a vast crowd of people gathered together. The prince asked the reason of it, and was told that they had arrested a corpse for several large sums of money which the dead man owed when he died. The prince replied that it was a pity creditors should be so cruel, and said, “Go bury the dead, and let his creditors come to my lodging, and there their debts shall be paid.” So they came, but in such great numbers that before night he had almost left himself moneyless.

Now Jack the Giant-killer, coming that way, was so taken with the generosity of the prince, that he wished to be his servant. This being agreed upon, the next morning they set forward on their journey together, when, as they were riding out of the town, an old woman called after the prince, saying, “He has owed me twopence these seven years ; pray pay me as well as the rest.” Putting his hand to his pocket, the prince gave the woman all he had left, so that after their day’s refreshment, which cost what small spell Jack had by him, they were without a penny between them.

Notice that Arthur’s son doesn’t get a name in this. Arthur does have several children in various versions of the story. It might be Sir Bors, a bastard from an early affair, who turns up early, and does nothing of significance.

It’s odd that the amount of money they need is exact to the penny to what they have: that’s Faerie business there. Arthur’s bloodline is so worked about by faeries and sorceresses it may not be the prince himself, but as we note, he doesn’t have an actual name.

When the sun began to grow low, the king’s son said, “Jack, since we have no money, where can we lodge this night “

But Jack replied, *’ Master, we’ll do well enough, for I have an uncle lives within two miles of this place. He is a huge and Monstrous Giant with three heads.

OK, let’s pause there. Jack is the son of a farmer from Land’s End and he has an uncle who is a giant. So, his mother was a giant? Or, maybe it’s like in Romania, where witches give birth to giants who give birth to vampires (or is it dragons?) who give birth to witches. It’s not strange for people’s backstories to change, but has Jack used Free Expression here to rewrite his story on the fly? Is he a faerie using Cognizance?

he is a huge and monstrous giant with three heads ; he’ll fight five hundred men in armour, and make them to fly before him/’

It’s a pity we didn’t see that story...

"Alas ! " quoth the prince, "what shall we do there? He'll certainly chop us up at a mouthful. Nay, we are scarce enough to fill one of his hollow teeth ! ""

"It is no matter for that," quoth Jack ; " I myself will go before and prepare the way for you ; therefore tarry and wait till I return." Jack then rode away full speed, and coming to the gate of the castle, he knocked so loud that he made the hills around to echo.

The giant roared out at this Hke thunder, ** Who's there?"

" He was answered, *' None but your poor Cousin Jack."

Quoth he, *' What news with my poor Cousin Jack? "

He replied, " Dear Uncle, heavy news, God wot ! "

"Prithee," quoth the giant, "what heavy news can come to me? I am a giant with three heads, and besides thou knowest I can fight five hundred men in armour, and make them fly like chaff before the wind."

Look, I don't want to kinkshame Jack's dad here, but are we saying his mum was a giant with three heads and, if so, how many heads does Jack have at this point? If you have the Giant Blood Virtue, are you a sort of Zaphod Beeblebrox character?

"Oh, but," quoth Jack, "here's the king's son a-coming with a thousand men in armour to kill you and destroy all that you have ! "

"Oh, Cousin Jack," said the giant, " this is heavy news indeed ! I will immediately run and hide myself, and thou shalt lock, bolt, and bar me in, and keep the keys until the prince is gone."

Having secured the giant. Jack fetched his master, when they made themselves heartily merry whilst the poor giant lay trembling in a vault under the ground. Early in the morning Jack furnished his master with a fresh supply of gold and silver, and then sent him three miles forward on his journey, at which time the prince was pretty well out of the smell of the giant. Jack then returned, and let the giant out of the vault, who asked what he should give him for keeping the castle safe.

So, storyguides: if you need your giants to survive a potent attack by magi: remember they have storm cellars.

"Why," quoth Jack "I desire nothing but the old coat and cap, together with the old rusty sword and slippers which are at your bed's head."

Quoth the giant, "Thou shalt have them ; and pray keep them for my sake, for they are things of excellent use. The coat will keep you invisible, the cap will furnish you with knowledge, the sword cuts asunder whatever you strike, and the shoes are of extraordinary swiftness. These may be useful to you, therefore take them with all my heart."

Being invisible, swift, wise and deadly, Jack is now a Mythic Companion. He's able to give low level magi a run for their money. Could one of his descendants be an enforcer for House Mercere for example?

Taking them, Jack thanked his uncle, and then having overtaken his master, they quickly arrived at the house of the lady the prince sought, who, finding the prince to be a suitor, prepared a splendid banquet for him. After the feasting was done, she wiped his mouth with a handkerchief, saying, "You must show me that handkerchief to-morrow morning, or else you will lose your head." With that she put it in her bosom.

The prince went to bed in great sorrow, but Jack's cap of knowledge taught him how it was to be got. In the middle of the night she called upon her familiar spirit to carry her to Lucifer.

Initially this sounded like an impossible challenges game, which is a thing that faerie brides sometimes do. In 4th Edition I set up one based on the traditional ballad "Scarborough Fair"

But Jack put on his coat of darkness and his shoes of swiftness, and was there as soon as she. When she entered the place of the evil one, she gave the handkerchief to old Lucifer, who laid it upon a shelf, whence Jack took it and brought it to his master, who showed it to the lady the next day, and so saved his life.

Invisibility generally works poorly on demons: is this one of the demon who wants to lose? We've discussed architectural demons before, who allow themselves to be tricked into building bridges.

On that day, she saluted the prince, telling him he must show her the lips to-morrow morning that she kissed last night, or lose his head. "Ah," he replied, "if you kiss none but mine, I will."

If she were a faerie, that'd be a perfectly suitable countermove in the game of challenges.

"That is neither here nor there," said she "if you do not, death's your portion!" At midnight she went as before, and was angry with old Lucifer for letting the handkerchief go. " But now," quoth she, " I will be too hard for the king's son, for I will kiss thee, and he is to show me thy lips/* Which she did, and Jack, who was standing by, cut off the devil's head and brought it under his invisible coat to his master, who the next morning pulled it out by the horns before the lady. The enchantment thus broken the evil spirit left her, and she appeared in all her beauty.

If this were a faerie story you'd expect there'd be three challenges, so maybe this was an evil spirit. It's odd for demons to leave body parts around: their bodies are temporary vessel made up of the subtle moisture of the material world, and they tend to dissipate once the animating spirit has left.

They were married the next morning,, and soon after went to the court of King Arthur, where Jack, for his many great deeds, was made one of the Knights of the Round Table.

Having been successful in all he did. Jack resolved not to remain idle, but to do what he could for the honour of his king and country, and begged King Arthur to fit him out with a horse and money to help him to travel in search of strange and new adventures. "For," said he, "there are many giants yet living in the farthest part of Wales, to the great damage of your majesty's liege subjects ; wherefore, may it please you to encourage me, I do not doubt but in a short time to cut them off root and branch, and so rid all the realm of those giants and monsters of nature." When the king had heard this noble request, he furnished Jack with all he had need of, and Jack started on his pursuit, taking with him the cap of knowledge, the sword of sharpness, the shoes of swiftness, and the invisible coat, the better to succeed in the dangerous adventures which now lay before him.

In the Transylvanian book we talked about a folk tradition called Hunters. Each line of Hunters specialised in a different supernatural foe. Could Jack be the ancestor of a line of Giant Killers, now dormant, because they no longer have prey?

Jack travelled over vast hills and wonderful mountains, and on the third day came to a large wood, which he had no sooner entered than he heard dreadful shrieks and cries. Casting his eyes round, he beheld with terror a huge giant dragging along a fair lady and a knight by the hair of their heads, with as much ease as if they had been a pair of gloves. At this sight Jack shed tears of pity, and then, getting off from his horse, he put on his invisible coat, and taking with him his sword of sharpness, at length with a swinging stroke cut off both the giant's legs below the knee, so that his fall made the trees to tremble.

At this the courteous knight and his fair lady, after returning Jack their hearty thanks, invited him home, there to refresh his strength after the battle, and receive some ample reward for his good services. But Jack vowed he would not rest until he had found out the giant's den. The knight, hearing this, was very sorrowful, and replied, " Noble stranger, it is too much to run a second risk ; this monster lived in a den under yonder mountain, with a brother more fierce and fiery than himself. Therefore, if you should go thither, and perish in the attempt, it would be a heart-breaking to me and my lady. Let me persuade you to go with us, and desist from any further pursuit."

"Nay," quoth Jack," were there twenty, not one should escape my fury. But when I have finished my task, I will come and pay my respects to you." Jack had not ridden more than a mile and a half, when the cave mentioned by the knight appeared to view, near the entrance of which he beheld the giant sitting upon a block of timber, with a knotted iron club by his side. waiting, as he supposed, for his brother's return with his prey. His goggle eyes were like flames of fire, his face grim and ugly, and his cheeks like a couple of large flitches of bacon, while the bristles of his beard resembled rods of iron wire, and the locks that hung down upon his brawny shoulders were like curled snakes or hissing adders.

Jack alighted from his horse, and putting on the coat of darkness, approached near the giant, saying softly, " Oh! are you there ^ It will not be long ere I shall take you fast by the beard." The giant all this while could not see him on account of his invisible coat, so that Jack, coming up close to the monster, struck a blow with his sword at his head, but missing his aim he cut off the nose instead. At this the giant roared like claps of thunder, and began to lay about him with his iron club like one stark mad. But Jack, running behind, drove his sword up to the hilt in the giant's back, which caused him to fall down dead. This done. Jack cut off the giant's head, and sent it, with his brother's head also, to King Arthur, by a waggoner he hired for that purpose.

Jack now resolved to enter the giants' cave in search of his treasure, and passing along through a great many windings and turnings, he came at length to a large room paved with freestone, at the upper end of which was a boiling caldron, and on the right hand a large table, at which the giants used to dine. Then he came to a window, barred with iron, through which he looked and beheld a vast crowd of unhappy captives, who, seeing him, cried out, "Alas ! young man, art thou come to be one amongst us in this miserable den

"Ay," quoth Jack, "but pray tell me why it is you are so imprisoned "

"* We are kept here," said one, "till such time as the giants have a wish to feast, and then the fattest among us is killed ! And many are the times they have dined upon murdered men ! "

"Say you so ?" quoth Jack, and straightway unlocked the gate and let them free, who all rejoiced like condemned men at sight of a reprieve. Then searching the giants' coffers, he shared the gold and silver equally amongst them.

It was about sunrise the next day when Jack, after seeing the captives on their way to their homes, mounted his horse to go on his journey^ and by the help of his directions, reached the knight's house about noon. He was received here with all signs of joy by the knight and his lady, who in respect to Jack prepared a feast which lasted many days, all the gentry in the neighbourhood being of the company. The worthy knight was

Tikewise pleased to present him with a beautiful ring, on which was engraved a picture of the giant dragging the distressed knight and his lady, with this motto — “We are in sad distress you see, Under a giant’s fierce command. But gain our lives and liberty By valiant Jack’s victorious hand.”

As noted in an episode last month, people don’t care gemstones in Mythic Europe anymore. There’s something a little unnatural about this knight.

But in the midst of all this mirth a messenger brought the dismal tidings that one Thunderdell, a giant with two heads, having heard of the death of his two kinsmen, came from the northern dales to be revenged on Jack, and was within a mile of the knight’s seat, the country people flying before him like chaff. But Jack was no whit daunted, and said, “Let him come ! I have a tool to pick his teeth ; and you, ladies and gentlemen, walk but forth into the garden, and you shall witness this giant Thunderdell’s death and destruction.”

The house of this knight was in the midst of a small island with a moat thirty feet deep and twenty feet wide around it, over which lay a drawbridge. Wherefore Jack employed men to cut through this bridge on both sides, nearly to the middle ; and then, dressing himself in his invisible coat, he marched against the giant with his sword of sharpness. Although the giant could not see Jack he smelt his approach, and cried out in these words — “Fee, fi, fo, fum! I smell the blood of an Englishman! Be he alive or be he dead, I’ll grind his bones to make me bread!”

The Opies call this the most famous war cry in British literature, and its suggested the entire race of giants uses it. Where it actually comes from is unknown. It’s earliest attestation is in “Have you been to Saffron Walden” from the 16th Century, in which a character says he does not know where it comes from. A variant is found in King Lear.

“Say’st thou so” said Jack ; “then thou art a monstrous miller indeed!

“At which the giant cried out again, “Art thou that villain who killed my kinsmen? Then I will tear thee with my teeth, suck thy blood, and grind thy bones to powder!”

“You will catch me first,” quoth Jack,

Take a Confidence point for a good quip!

...and throwing off his invisible coat, so that the giant might see him, and putting on his shoes of swiftness, he ran from the giant, who followed like a walking castle, so that the very earth seemed to shake at every step. Jack led him a long dance, in order that the knights and ladies might see ; and at last, to end the matter, ran lightly over the drawbridge, the giant, in full speed, pursuing him with his club. Then, coming to the middle

of the bridge, the giant’s great weight broke it down, and he tumbled headlong into the water, where he rolled and wallowed like a whale.

Jack, standing by the moat, laughed at him all the while ; but though the giant foamed to hear him scoff, and plunged from place to place in the moat, yet he could not get out to be revenged. Jack at length got a cart-rope and cast it over the two heads of the giant, and drew him ashore by a team of horses, and then cut off both his heads with his sword of sharpness, and sent them to King Arthur.

So, he’s sent at least five heads to Arthur at this point. What’s Arthur doing with them? I’m reminded of a cartoon you should seek on the internet, which shows Sun Tzu writing a sequel to The Art of War called The Crafts of War and his editor telling him that he’s gone insane. Is Arthur keeping them? Making cauldrons out of them? Your magi might want one of those cauldrons. Is he giving them to magicians in his service? Is there a pile of them at the bottom of the magical lake from which swords come? If he’s killing every giant, does that include his uncle?

At this point I’m reminded of the curse of the 12 days of Christmas where a progression of bizarre, unwanted gifts keep piling up. “Arthur there’s another waggon of rotten heads out here for you!”

What do you do if your covenant has the same problem? Someone keeps dropping off a skull every morning, and not a little skull: a skull that takes a wagon to carry. In time do you become inured to the horror and use them as building materials? Are your magi a mere six months of desensitisation from Geigeresque horror? Have I listened to “Autoclave” too often?

After some time spent in mirth and pastime. Jack, taking leave of the knights and ladies, set out for new adventures. Through many woods he passed, and came at length to the foot of a high mountain. Here, late at night, he found a lonesome house, and knocked at the door, which was opened by an ancient man with a head as white as snow. “Father!” said Jack, “have you any place where a traveller may rest that has lost his way?”

“Yes’ said the old man ; “you are right welcome to my poor cottage.” Whereupon Jack entered, and down they sat together, and the old man began to speak as follows : — “Son, I know you are the great conqueror of giants, and behold, my son, on the top of this mountain is an enchanted castle, kept by a giant named Galligantus, who, by the help of an old conjuror, betrays knights and ladies into his castle, where, by magic art, they are transformed into many shapes and forms ; but above all, I weep for the fate of a duke’s daughter, whom they fetched from her father’s garden, carrying her through the air in a burning chariot drawn by fiery dragons, and then shut her up within the castle, and transformed her into the shape of a

a white hind. And though many knights have tried to break the enchantment, and set her free, yet no one could do it on account of two dreadful griffins which are placed at the castle gate, and which destroy every one who comes near. But you, my son, having an invisible coat, may pass by them unseen. There you will find written on the gates of the castle in large letters by what means the enchantment may be broken.”

So, this is clearly a faerie mentor. How else would he know of the invisible cloak? It's handy that the castle has written instructions on the side. The lady's a prize.

Your characters could take over this place: a fiery chariot drawn by griffins sounds like a great way to get from place to place without study penalties for time away from the lab.

The old man having ended. Jack gave him his hand, and promised that in the morning he would venture his life to free the lady. In the morning Jack arose and put on his invisible cloak and magic cap and shoes, and prepared himself for the task. When he had reached the top of the mountain, he soon saw the two fiery griffins, but passed them without fear, because of his invisible coat, and having passed beyond them, he found upon the gates of the castle a golden trumpet hung by a silver chain, under which these lines were written — *’
Whoever shall this trumpet blow, Shall soon the giant overthrow. And break the black enchantment straight ; So all shall be in happy state.*’

Jack had no sooner read this but he blew the trumpet, at which the castle trembled to its vast foundations, and the giant and conjuror were in horrid fear, biting their thumbs and tearing their hair, knowing their wicked reign was at an end. Then the giant, stooping to take up his club. Jack at one blow cut off his head ; whereupon the conjuror, mounting up into the air, was carried away in a whirlwind.

Thumb biting is, in certain Irish customs, a traditional, Druidic, method of making magic more powerful by shedding blood. Sometimes it's called bone-gnawing, as, if I remember a Norse saga correctly, the bite might go all the way through the flesh to the bone underneath, potentially sacrificing the thumb.

Thus was the enchantment broken, and all the lords and ladies who had so long been transformed into birds and beasts returned to their proper shapes, and the castle vanished away in a cloud of smoke. This being done, the head of Galligantus was likewise, in the usual manner, brought to the court of King Arthur, where, the very next day. Jack followed with the knights and ladies who had been so happily set free. Whereupon, as a reward for his good services, the king bade the duke give his daughter in marriage to honest Jack. So married they were, and the whole kingdom was filled with joy at the wedding.

Furthermore, the king bestowed on Jack a noble dwelling, with very beautiful lands thereto belonging, where he and his lady lived in great joy and happiness all the rest of their days.

You could put this Duchy anywhere, so that your covenant is nearby. Arthur's court contained the Dukes of Brittany, for example. In northern Wales there wasn't a duchy in the traditional stories but the King of Norgalis, literally northern Wales, was one of the members of the alliance which Arthur crushed. His lands went to Arthur's brother-in-law, Urien, husband of Morgana le Fay. You could put Jack's grave, and descendants, wherever you like.

MAN – THE WITCH OF SLIEU WALLIAN

One of our Isle of Man episodes. This story was originally collected by Sophia Morrison and was recorded into the public domain by Andrew Calvillo. Thanks to Andrew and all the people at LibriVox. After the story I'll be popping up with a few observations.

It was Midsummer Day, and the Peel Herring Fleet, with sails half set, was ready for sea. The men had their barley sown, and their potatoes down, and now their boats were rigged and nets stowed on board and they were ready for the harvest of the sea. It was a fine day, the sky was clear and the wind was in the right airt, being from the north. But, as they say, 'If custom will not get custom, custom will weep.' A basinful of water was brought from the Holy Well and given to the Wise Woman that sold fair winds, as she stood on the harbour-side with the women and children to watch the boats off. They told her to look and tell of the luck of the Herring Fleet. She bent over the water and, as she looked, her face grew pale with [145]fear, and she gasped: 'Hurroose, hurroose! An' do ye know what I'm seeing?'

'Let us hear,' said they.

I'm seeing the wild waves lashed to foam away by great Bradda Head,

I'm seeing the surge round the Chicken's Rock an' the breaker's lip is red;

I'm seeing where corpses toss in the Sound, with nets an' gear an' spars,

An' never a one of the Fishing Fleet is riding under the stars.

There was a dead hush, and the men gathered close together, muttering, till Gorry, the Admiral of the Fishing Fleet, stepped forward, caught the basin out of her hands and flung it out to sea, growling:

'Sure as I'm alive, sure as I'm alive, woman, I've more than half a mind to heave you in after it. If I had my way, the like of you an' your crew would be run into the sea. Boys, are we goin' to lose a shot for that bleb? Come on, let's go an' chance it with the help of God.'

I'Aye, no herring, no wedding. Let's go an' chance it,' said young Cashen.

So hoisting sails they left the port and when the land was fairly opened out, so that they could see the Calf, they headed for the south and stood out for the Shoulder. Soon a fine breeze put them in the fishing-ground, and every man was looking out for signs of herring—perkins, gannets, fish playing on the surface, oily water, and such like. When the sun was set and the evening was too dark to see the Admiral's Flag, the skipper of each lugger held his arm out at full length, and when he could no longer see the black in his thumb-nail he ordered the men to shoot their nets. And as they lay to their trains it all fell out as the witch had said. Soon the sea put on another face, the wind from westward blew a sudden gale and swelled up the waves with foam. The boats were driven hither and thither, and the anchors dragged quickly behind them. Then the men hoisted sail before the wind and struggled to get back to land, and the lightning was all the light they had. It was so black dark that they could see no hill, and above the uproar of the sea they could hear the surges pounding on the rocky coast. The waves were rising like mountains, breaking over the boats and harrying them from stem to stern. They were dashed to pieces on the rocks of the Calf, and only two men escaped with their lives.

But there was one boat that had got safe back to port before the storm, and that was the boat of the Seven Boys. She was a Dalby boat and belonged to seven young men who were all unmarried. They were always good to the Dooinniey Marrey, the Merman, and when they were hauling their nets they would throw him a dishful of herring, and in return they had always good luck with their fishing. This night, after the Fleet had shot their nets sometime, the night being still fine and calm, the Seven Boys heard the voice of the Merman hailing them and saying:

'It is calm and fine now; there will be storm enough soon!'

When the Skipper heard this he said: 'Every herring must hang by its own gills,' and he and his crew at once put their nets on board and gained the harbour. And it was given for law ever after that no crew was to be made up of single men only; there was to be at least one married man on board and no man was bound by his hiring to fish in this same south sea, which was called 'The Sea of Blood' from that day.

As for the witch, they said she had raised the storm by her spells and they took her to the top of the great mountain Slieu Whallian, put her into a spiked barrel and rolled her from the top to the bottom, where the barrel sank into the bog. For many and many a long year there was a bare track down the steep mountain-side, where grass would never grow, nor ling, nor gorse. They called it 'The Witch's Way,' and they say that her screams are heard in the air every year on the day she was put to death.

PLOT HOOKS

The witch divines the future using water from the holy well. This isn't unusual in Celtic areas: you see similar things in Cornwall. It may seem strange in the standard Hermetic setting for holy places to produce what we would recognize as vis, yet throughout Celtic charming, it is extremely common for folk magicians to pray, use holy objects, invoke angels or otherwise call on the divine.

Does this witch have the Visions Virtue or is she casting Sailor's Foretaste of the Morrow or is she simply lying, then using her charms to make her lies true (something we saw in another predictor in the Tales From a Chinese Studio last year).

She's a witch who sells fair winds. I'm not sure what this means in a Manx context. If we were having a look at one of our Cornish folktales, and we had a witch who sold fair wind, that would mean she makes magic knots. When a fair wind was blowing, she would climb to the top of the cliff, tie three knots in a handkerchief or a rope, then would sell that rope to a sailor. When a sailor has become becalmed, he can undo one of the knots to create a breeze. This is a minor folk charm.

It's not clear to me why having a married man in each boat increases the likelihood of all the boats coming home, given that the boat that came home is full of unmarried men. I presume it's an attempt to use either the blessing of the sacrament of marriage or the True Love Virtue to bring the men back. Alternatively it could just be that married men take fewer risks. At the start they talk about "No herring, no wedding." This means that poor men can't get married. Married men are a little bit more financially stable, they don't need to take dramatic risks, to win a wife, and therefore their cool heads may bring the entire boat home. It does seem like weaponizing miracles can you do the something with your grog turb for example?

Putting a witch in a spiked barrel and rolling her down a hill has been the traditional way of destroying witches in Man since pre-Christian times. It used to happen on hills that were dedicated to the god Thor. I believe that this type of hill, now a hill of St John, is where the Parliament of the Isle of Man still meets. I am not sure if these are meant to be the same two hills. It means that the hill she was rolled down either, because it is sacred to St John, has a Divine Aura or, because Saint John is used pretty much wherever you want to use fairy power (his feast is the midsummer equinox) whether it's still in some sense a human sacrifice to Thor. and therefore a source of great fairy power.

The witch's way creates a scar in the land which may be Infernal and her screams are heard annually. I've been playing a lot of Fallen London in the last year, and in Fallen London wild words are one of the categories of treasure. I wonder if the witch's screams can be trapped in a bottle and used as Mentem vis. It maybe infernally tainted. In my saga it would be, but your saga may vary

CHRONICLES OF SHADOW VALLEY 1

The works of Lord Dunsany provided many dozens of plot hooks, and monsters, for the early episodes of this podcast. It also provided material for the longest. In my fossicking I took the easy pieces, in his short story collections, and left Dunsany's novels alone. I thought them insufficiently fantastical. I was, however, mistaken.

Time to remedy my error. This episode begins Don Rodriguez: The Chronicles of Shadow Valley, Dunsany's first novel. It's a little like Ray Bradbury's novels, in that you can see its a series of short pieces which have been stitched together. We begin by meeting our protagonist, who is called Rodriguez Trinidad Fernandez, Concepcion Henrique Maria in a section I've cut from what follows. He might make a fine companion to any covenant. I'll be cutting out some of the more florid patches of the work, although I encourage you to check them out.

Our reader is Ed Humpal, who gave these recordings to the public through L:ibrivox. Long term listeners may remember Ed's voice from some of our earlier forays beyond the fields we know. These works are quite long, and Ed's voice is quite distinct from mine, so I won't save my comments for the end.

And now, to the Golden Age of Spain.

After long and patient research I am still unable to give to the reader of these Chronicles the exact date of the times that they tell of. Were it merely a matter of history there could be no doubts about the period; but where magic is concerned, to however slight an extent, there must always be some element of mystery, arising partly out of ignorance and partly from the compulsion of those oaths by which magic protects its precincts from the tiptoe of curiosity.

Moreover, magic, even in small quantities, appears to affect time, much as acids affect some metals, curiously changing its substance, until dates seem to melt into a mercurial form that renders them elusive even to the eye of the most watchful historian...

THE FIRST CHRONICLE

Being convinced that his end was nearly come, and having lived long on earth (and all those years in Spain, in the golden time), the Lord of the Valleys of Arguento Harez, whose heights see not Valladolid, called for his eldest son.

The lordship is fictional, but Valladolid was the capital of the united Spain under Ferdinand and Isabella. It is in the northwest of modern Spain.

And so he addressed him when he was come to his chamber, dim with its strange red hangings and august with the splendour of Spain: "O eldest son of mine, your younger brother being dull and clever, on whom those traits that women love have not been bestowed by God; and know my eldest son that here on earth, and for ought I know Hereafter, but certainly here on earth, these women be the arbiters of all things; and how this be so God knoweth only, for they are vain and variable, yet it is surely so: your younger brother then not having been given those ways that women prize,..For himself he will win nothing, and therefore I will leave him these my valleys, for not unlikely it was for some sin of mine that his spirit was visited with dullness, as Holy Writ sets forth, the sins of the fathers being visited on the children; and thus I make him amends. But to you I leave my long, most flexible, ancient Castilian blade, which infidels dreaded if old songs be true. Merry and lithe it is, and its true temper singeth when it meets another blade as two friends sing when met after many years. It is most subtle, nimble and exultant; and what it will not win for you in the wars, that shall be won for you by your mandolin, for you have a way with it that goes well with the old airs of Spain.

Here we see signs of the flux in time which Dunsany noted at the beginning: there are no mandolins in Spain before the 18th century, because there aren't mandolins anywhere before that time: they are a relatively late descendant of the lute. Either this familiay has an insrument no-one else has, which would explain why they get away with some much because of its music, or this is actually a lute.

And choose, my son, rather a moonlight night when you sing under those curved balconies that I knew, ah me, so well; for there is much advantage in the moon. In the first place maidens see in the light of the moon, especially in the Spring, more romance than you might credit, for it adds for them a mystery to the darkness which the night has not when it is merely black. And if any statue should gleam

There's a situational bonus for his Music roll there. Also, there's no magnolia tree: that arrives in Spain via the Columbian exchange. It's possible the old man, in his dying, is passing on a Knack Virtue to his advice.

There is this advantage also in the moon, that, if interrupters come, the moonlight is better suited to the play of a blade than the mere darkness of night; indeed but the merry play of my sword in the moonlight was often a joy to see, it so flashed, so danced, so sparkled. In the moonlight also one makes no unworthy stroke, but hath scope for those fair passes that Sevastiani taught, which were long ago the wonder of Madrid."

I have no idea if this swordmaster Sevastiani is real. I presume not, although I do note there's also a Hermetic duelling school of a similar name, Sebastian. San Sebastian is a place: it's the centre of the Basque territory in the north of Spain. The saint, as defender of plague victims and soldiers, was popular in the later medieval period.

The old lord paused, and breathed for a little space, as it were gathering breath for his last words to his son. He breathed deliberately, then spoke again. "I leave you," he said, "well content that you have the two accomplishments, my son, that are most needful in a Christian man, skill with the sword and a way with the mandolin. There be other arts indeed among the heathen, for the world is wide and hath full many customs, but these two alone are needful." And then with that grand manner that they had at that time in Spain, although his strength was failing, he gave to his eldest son his Castilian sword. He lay back then in the huge, carved, canopied bed; his eyes closed, the red silk curtains rustled, and there was no sound of his breathing. But the old lord's spirit, whatever journey it purposed, lingered yet in its ancient habitation....silence fell again, with scarcely the sound of breathing. Then gathering up his strength for the last time and looking at his son, "The sword to the wars," he said. "The mandolin to the balconies." With that he fell back dead.

The commands of a dying man have a mystical power about them. It's wise for the young man to not ignore them.

Now there were no wars at that time so far as was known in Spain, but that old lord's eldest son, regarding those last words of his father as a commandment, determined then and there in that dim, vast chamber to gird his legacy to him and seek for the wars, wherever the wars might be, so soon as the obsequies of the sepulture were ended. And of those obsequies I tell not here, for they are fully told in the Black Books of Spain, and the deeds of that old lord's youth are told in the Golden Stories. The Book of Maidens mentions him, and again we read of him in Gardens of Spain.

To have a think about these books: I don't think the Black Books of Spain exist. If you are thinking of the Golden Legends, when we read "Golden Stories" then that gives as its counter the Black Legend, which is a historiographic dispute that kicked off before Dunsany wrote. At its core, it's that Spain is used as a whipping boy by foreign historians. When the Spanish go to the New World and ransack the place, they are called conquerors, vandals, and monsters, but when British or French people do exactly the same thing they are colonists, founders, and traders.

The Book of Maidens might be a reference to "The Book of the City of Ladies" by Christine de Pisan. Alternatively it might be a reference to *De Mulieribus Claris* ("Concerning Famous Women") by Boccaccio. Either way, it might explain the older man's idea that women are the true masters of things. These were early works that advocated the education of, and respect for, women.

The Gardens of Spain is a puzzle. There's a classical piece called *Nights in the Gardens of Spain*, which is meant to evoke Sufi mystical dances in the third section, but I can't place the book.

So he was buried, and his eldest son fared forth with his legacy dangling from his girdle in its long, straight, lovely scabbard, blue velvet, with emeralds on it, fared forth on foot along a road of Spain...Upon his back he had slung his mandolin....

And all the way as he went the young man looked at the flame of those southern flowers, flashing on either side of him all the way, as though the rainbow had been broken in Heaven and its fragments fallen on Spain. All the way as he went he gazed at those flowers, the first anemones of the year; and long after, whenever he sang to old airs of Spain, he thought of Spain as it appeared that day in all the wonder of Spring; the memory lent a beauty to his voice and a wistfulness to his eyes that accorded not ill with the theme of the songs he sang, and were more than once to melt proud hearts deemed cold.

He seems to have developed a virtue like Free Expression?

And so gazing he came to a town that stood on a hill, before he was yet tired, though he had done nigh twenty of those flowery miles of Spain; and since it was evening and the light was fading away, he went to an inn and drew his sword in the twilight and knocked with the hilt of it on the oaken door. The name of it was the Inn of the Dragon and Knight. A light was lit in one of the upper windows, the darkness seemed to deepen at that moment, a step was heard coming heavily down a stairway....

And there, on the very doorstep of an Infernally-tainted inn, we leave our young hero. His statistics will be given on the blog that accompanies the the podcast. Next month, when we return to the chronicles, he hires a terrible servant, who is also suited as a companion or grog, after he dispatches the evil of the inn, making it a suitable site for a Spring covenant with a bit of spirit.