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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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## Horn In Exile

Ere Horn had sailed long, the wind rose, and the ship drove blindly before it for many leagues, till at length it was cast up on land. Horn stepped out on to the beach, and there before him saw two princes, whose names (for they greeted him kindly) were Harild and Berild.

"Whence are you?" they asked, when they had told him who they were. "What are you called?"

Horn thought it wise to hide his real name from them, lest it should come to Aylmer's ears, and his anger reach Horn even in this distant land. "I am called Cuthbert," he answered, "and I am come far from the west in this little ship, seeking adventure and honour."

"Well met, sir knight," said Harild. "Come now to our father the king: you shall do knightly deeds in his service." They led him to King Thurston their father; and when Thurston saw that Horn was a man of might, skilled in arms, and a true knight, he took him into his service readily. So Horn—or Cuthbert, as they knew him—abode at Thurston's court, and served the king in battle. But no great and notable thing befell him until the coming of Christmas.

It was King Thurston's custom to make each Christmas a great feast, lasting many days. To this feast Horn was bidden, with all the other knights of the court. Great mirth and joy was there that Yule-tide; all men feasted

with light hearts. Suddenly, about noon-day, the great doors of the king's hall were flung open, and a monstrous giant strode in. He was fully armed, in pagan raiment, and his mien was proud and terrible.

"Sit still, sir king," he roared, as Thurston turned to him.

"Hearken to my tidings. I am come hither with a Saracen host, and my comrades are close at hand. From them I bring a challenge; and this is the challenge. One of us alone will fight any three of your knights, in a certain place. If your three slay our one, then we will depart and leave you and your land unscathed. But if our one champion slays your three, then will we take your land for our own, and deal with it and you as it pleases us. To-morrow at dawn we will make ready for the combat; and if you take not up this challenge, and send your appointed knights to battle, then will we burn and lay waste and slay all over this realm."

Thereupon he turned, and stalked out of the hall, saying never another word. "This is a sorry hap," said King Thurston, when the Saracen had gone and left them all aghast. "Yet must we take up this challenge. Cuthbert," he said, turning to Horn, "you have heard this pagan boast; will you be one of our three champions? Harild and Berild, my sons, shall be the other two, and may God prosper all three! But alas! it is of little avail. We are all dead men!"

But Horn felt no fear. He started up from the board when he heard the king's sorrowful words. "Sir king," he cried, "this is all amiss. It is not to our honour that three Christian knights should fight this one pagan. I

alone will lay the giant low, with my own sword, unaided."

Thurston hoped little of this plan, but none the less he agreed to it; and when the next day came, he arose betimes, and with his own hands helped to arm Horn; and having made ready, he rode down to the field of battle with him. There, in a great open space, stood the Saracen giant awaiting them, his friends standing by him to abide the issue of the combat. They made little tarrying, but fell to right soon. Horn dealt mightily with the giant; he attacked him at once, and showered blows upon him, so that the pagan was hard pressed, and begged for a breathing space.

"Let us rest awhile, sir knight," he said. "Never suffered I such blows from any man's hand yet, except from King Murry, whom I slew in Suddenne."

At that dear name Horn's blood ran hot within him: before him he saw the man who had slain his father and had driven himself from his kingdom. He fell to more furiously than ever, and drove hard at the giant beneath the shield; and as he smote he cast his eye upon the ring Rimenhild had given him.

Therewith his strength was redoubled; so straight and strong was the blow, so true his arm, that he pierced the giant to the heart, and he fell dead upon the ground.

When they saw their champion slain, the Saracens were stricken with panic. They turned and fled headlong to their ships, Thurston and his knights pursuing. A great battle was fought by the ships: Harild and Berild were

slain, but Horn did such deeds of prowess that every pagan was killed.

There was great lamentation over the two princes. Their bodies were brought to the king's palace and laid in state, and lastly buried in a great church built for them.

