

# DAGON

#690, APA-Q #601

September 2017

## WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

(I am trying a sort of experiment here. Long-term readers of **Dagon** may recall several articles about “The Four and a Half Kingdoms” which appeared a few years ago. I have since tentatively considered a book about an American, whose family came from one of those nations, and who travels there on a secret mission of some kind, and has adventures in some or all of those countries. In a well-written book the title is usually one of the last things decided upon, but I have a title for the first chapter, and that will have to do for the time being. I would appreciate suggestions from readers about the future development of this tale.)

### Chapter 1: Uncle Dunkle

When I was a boy, I had two educations. One was in the public schools of Short Hairs, New Jersey. The other was from Uncle Dunkle.

Neither of those was their proper name. At the time of the American Revolution, the town had another name, but so many Hessian mercenaries with short military haircuts settled there, that people started calling the place “Short Hairs”, and the name stuck. As for the man I called “Uncle Dunkle”, he actually was my great-uncle, my grandmother’s brother, and his name was Wilhelm Dunkelberger. But when I and my siblings and playmates were little, and he told us stories, some of us couldn’t manage his full name, and he became “Uncle Dunkle” to all of us.

Even in the public schools we were taught about our town’s Hessian heritage. When the thirteen American colonies revolted against British rule, the British government hired mercenary soldiers from some place in Germany called “Hesse”, to help suppress the rebels. But King George III never realized why so many Hessians volunteered. They just wanted to get out of Germany, and settle in a different country where they could start their own farms or businesses, and attend their own churches. So as soon as these mercenaries got to New Jersey, many of them deserted, married American women or, with luck, German women they could talk with. And, more than two hundred years later, their descendants, including my own family, are still here. Most of them intermarried with other Hessians or their descendants

One of those descendants was Uncle Dunkle. He and other Hessian families even continued to intermarry, and to speak German, and we *Kinder* were able to learn enough that he started telling us stories in German as well as English. Most of these stories were about imaginary countries with peculiar people and customs - or at least we *thought* the countries, which he

called "The Four and a Half Kingdoms", were imaginary. One of them was not a kingdom, but rather a *queendom*. It was ruled by women, who dominated the realm socially. The queendom was so old that no one knew when it had been founded, and the queen had a new husband each year. (Later, when we were old enough, we were told what became of the old husbands.) There was another realm where the Bibles had three parts, not two. The parts were called "the Old Testament", "the New Testament", and "the Newer Testament", and its people worshipped a "Holy Quaternity". In still another country the ruler was called a "Grand Duke", and he presided at a table of knights, called "The Knights of the Trapezoidal Table". (I never found out what a "trapezoid" was until I took geometry in high school.) And, in addition, there was a lake called Loch Mess, in which a monster supposedly lived.

The first time Uncle Dunkle told us about the Loch Mess monster, one of the older girls asked, "Don't you mean the Loch Ness monster?" Uncle Dunkle was not fazed. He replied, "*Nein*, Gretchen, that's in Scotland. The name 'Loch Mess' is a corruption of the Latin 'Lacus Missarum', which means 'Lake of the Masses'. It comes from all the masses that were said on the shores of the lake, to drive the monster away. But that never worked, and the beast is still there. By the way, Gretchen, does your high school offer classes in Latin?"

"Yes," she replied, "But I never took it. They say it's real hard."

"You understand my German quite well," he said. "And the more languages you know, the easier each new one is. In fact, if you ever go to the Four and a Half Kingdoms, you'll need Latin for one of them. They speak Latin in the Temporary Roman Empire."

When we learned a slightly different sort of European geography in school, I asked Uncle Dunkle why we never learned in school about the Four and a Half Kingdoms. He said, "*Diese Länder sind so klein, daß...*" - er, no, I guess I'd better report his tales in English. Uncle Dunkle always complained that most Americans spoke only one language, which is why he sometimes spoke to us in the German dialect used in the Four and a Half Kingdoms. He told us that those countries were all located in the Balkan Massif, in the Inner Balkans, and that they are so small that almost nobody bothers with them. Not all of the so-called Hessian mercenaries, he told us, came to America from Hesse. Most of the Germans who came to Short Hairs were from the Grand Duchy, including his - and my - multiply-great-grandfather Dunkelberger.

"I know I've told you," he said, "that the oldest of the kingdoms is the Kingdom - er, Queendom - of Skandalutz."

"The one where women rule?" Gretchen asked.

"Yes," Uncle Dunkle replied. "They're called 'Skandals', and the language they speak is 'Skandalous', but many of them can also speak Latin, German, or an old-fashioned sort of English. And a lot of their kings come from other countries."

"You never told us before," Gretchen said, "but when they crown a new king, whatever happens to the old one?"

"Well, I suppose you're now old enough to find out," Uncle Dunkle said. "Every spring

they hold a big Festival of the Spring Equinox. People come from all over the Balkan Massif, and sometimes even further. They sing, and dance, and put on plays, and hold religious ceremonies in honor of the Mother Goddess - and, er, usually the Festival turns into a real orgy." Some of the boys, and also Gretchen and a couple of other girls, giggled at this. "And, at the beginning of the Festival, all the men there, Skandalous or foreign, have to get tickets in the Sacred Lottery. Then, after the Sacred Banquet, a priestess draws a name, and the winner gets to be king for the next year."

"What happens to the old king?" a female voice asked.

"That's what they eat at the Sacred Banquet," Uncle Dunkle replied. "Before the Sacred Banquet, the old year's king is sacrificed to the Mother Goddess by the priestesses, and cooked and served."

"Then why does any man ever attend the Festival?" I asked.

"Because of the orgy," Uncle Dunkle told her. "They come from all over the Four and a Half Kingdoms, and further. John Lennon once observed, 'Only one bloke gets chosen King, but everybody gets - er - has a good time.'"

"They have a new king every year," a girl sitting next to Gretchen asked, "but how do they get new queens?"

"When the queen dies," Uncle Dunkle replied, "her youngest nubile daughter becomes the next queen, who is also High Priestess of the Mother Goddess. This leads to a succession of long reigns and a conservative social outlook, and an occasional competition to prove nubility."

"There must be a huge birth rate, nine months after each Spring Equinox Festival," I said.

"Not particularly," he replied. "In ancient times the priestesses developed a contraceptive of great efficacy, whose recipe is still a state secret."

Then he rather obviously changed the subject, and started describing the rest of the Four and a Half Kingdoms. "The Temporary Roman Empire was founded by the Roman Emperor Nero. In the year 68, Rome revolted against him, and he responded by killing his double, a slave named Falgaius. He faked his double's death to make it look like a suicide, and with a legion of loyal troops he fled to the Balkan Massif. This legion founded a 'Temporary Roman Empire' there, and the local Romans accepted him as Emperor. Since he had made off with the Roman Treasury, he built a city which he named 'Roma Temporalia' and proclaimed that he would rule the Empire from there until he was restored to Rome. He never was restored, but his successors in Roma Temporalia still insist that someday they will return to Rome and re-establish the whole Roman Empire there."

"Is that why you want us to learn Latin as well as German?" I asked.

"Learning another language never harmed anybody," he replied. "During the Second World War, I was a young man, and I got a good - and very safe - job with the army. It was, I should say, the American army. It did *not* involve combat, but interpreting what our German prisoners and deserters were talking about."

"Then," he continued, "during the Dark Ages a group of Slobbic nomads called the 'Pravoslavni' settled in the Balkan Massif. Some of them, including a man named Polykarp, went to Constantinople and became Christians. When they returned to the Balkan Massif, Polykarp claimed that he had received a new divine revelation, and was now the fourth person of the 'Holy Quaternity'. So he became the Pravoslavnian Patriarch."

I was really getting interested in all this, so I asked Uncle Dunkle, "And what happened to the other two kingdoms?"

"Well," Uncle Dunkle went on, "the Grand Duchy got started when Kaiser Charlemagne hired an army of German mercenaries to fight off the Slobbic barbarians. They restricted the Pravoslavnians to their own holdings in the Balkan Massif, and settled themselves and a highly mixed group of female camp-followers right next to them. Charlemagne created their leader the Grand Duke of Wogastisburg. That's why the nations of the Balkan Massif are called the Four and a Half Kingdoms. The Grand Duchy is technically not a kingdom, but a feudal subdivision of the Holy Roman Empire. That empire ceased to exist in 1806, to prevent Napoleon from making himself its emperor, but the term "Half Kingdom" is still used."

"Is that the country that was neither holy nor Roman nor an empire?" I asked.

"*Ach!* So you know your Goethe! But why did you enroll in a German class? You speak German as well as anyone in Short Hairs - which, admittedly, isn't saying much."

"I was looking for an easy 'A'." I explained. "After all, I can already speak German,"

"I'd bet that idea didn't turn out so well," Uncle Dunkel laughed.

"It didn't," I said. "But how did you know?"

"Remember," he replied. "most of the German settlers who came to Short Hairs were mostly not Hessian mercenaries, but a mixture of Balkan Germans who wanted to get away from the wars they're always having in the Balkans. If you so much as order a beer in a German university town, any student there will know what sort of background you have in German."

"You're right, Uncle Dunkel," I confessed. "Once I used the word *meschuggeh* in class, and Herr Scheinglantz said it isn't even German!"

"He was right," said Uncle Dunkel, dismissing the topic. "But anyhow, about a century later, Charlemagne's eventual successor, the Holy Roman Emperor Otto I, had another batch of barbarians on his border. His scribes had lost the records of the Grand Duke's title, so Kaiser Otto had two sets of well-armed claimants on his hands. So he hired another batch of Hessian mercenaries and turned them loose on the nomads. They were easily able to scare them off, and Kaiser Otto gave their leader the title "Pfalzgraf of Schlampenbüttel."

"How did the Grand Duke react to that?" I asked.

"He started a war with the Pfalzgraf's troops," Uncle Dunkel replied. "But nobody was really interested in fighting other Hessians, so the war dragged on. Eventually the Grand Duke died - of boredom, some said - and his daughter and heiress Gertrud Greatgirth married the son and heir of the Pfalzgraf. Their son became the Grand Duke of Wogastisburg-Schlampenbüttel.

He was fond of medieval knightly romances, and when he became Grand Duke, he founded the Order of the Trapezoidal Table. Knighthoods are given to worthy candidates for the honor. 'Worthiness' is usually defined as large sums of money from people who want the title 'Sir' in front of their names."

"Wasn't the Balkan Massif getting a bit crowded then?" somebody asked.

"Not really," Uncle Dunkle answered. "A population that believes saints' relics can cure sword wounds is not going to get crowded. And each of the Four and a Half Kingdoms bordered all of the others, and on Loch Mess as well. Of course, the Grand Ducal Mathematician Count Uptoten claimed that this is topologically impossible in a simply connected system. 'But in the Four and a Half Kingdoms,' the Grand Duke Deutobold VII retorted, 'nothing is simple.'"

"Did the Loch Mess monster get a lot of them?"

"Not as many as were killed in the Circus Minimus," said Uncle Dunkle. "Of course, Roma Temporarily had to have everything the original Rome did. So they fight wild beasts or gladiators in the Circus Minimus when they aren't having chariot races there. Agents still search distant jungles and wastelands to bring back exotic beasts for the arena, although many observers doubt some of the *most* exotic claims. The arena's 'unicorn' is widely alleged to be a surgically altered white horse with a narwhal's horn imperfectly grafted to its forehead, and it has proven impossible to find a woman qualified to ride it. The Temporary Romans claim that the arena also has a manticore, and if the Loch Mess monster is ever captured, it will be forced to fight the manticore in the Circus Minimus. However, others believe that the "manticore" is really a bob-tailed saber-toothed tiger from Skandalutz, with a lion's mane attached to its shoulders.

"Other Roman institutions perpetuated in Roma Temporarily include the Senate, the Praetorian Guard, and the Pagan religion of ancient Rome. This attracts missionaries of more recently founded faiths, which come in handy when the lions at the Circus Minimus need to be fed."

Uncle Dunkel paused to clear his throat and drain a flask of the wine which is the best-known export of Roma Temporarily.

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Uncle Dunkle resumed his account of the Four and a Half Kingdoms a few days later, when school was out and we were more interested in his brand of Balkan geography anyhow. I started him off by asking, "You were describing the religion of the Pravoslavnican Patrimony of Polykarp when we got sidetracked on other things. If they are as odd as the other Four and a Half Kingdoms, they must be really peculiar,"

"They are," said Uncle Dunkel. "They were Slobbic by language and culture when they arrived in the Balkan Massif when the Dark Ages were at their darkest. But they claimed to be the Lost Thirteenth Tribe of Israel. According to an oral tradition, after Tamar seduced Judah as described in Genesis 38, she set out to score the rest of the family. This tradition has it that her son Klutz was begotten posthumously by the ghost of Jacob, a tradition which was supported by Numbers 24:17, which they read as 'a Spectre shall rise out of Israel'. Prior to their conversion

by Polykarp, the Tribe of Klutz worshipped a deity called JEHoover, whom they hailed in this hymn:

“He sees you when you’re sleeping  
He knows if you’re awake,

He knows if you’ve been bad or good,  
So be good for goodness sake.”

The Tribe of Klutz, called “Zapadoslavs” by philologists, was converted to Christianity during the fourth century by the Roman Emperor Theodosius I, who threatened to slaughter the entire tribe if they refused. For this demonstration of the fundamental principle of Christian doctrine, he is still adored as a saint by their descendants.

“However, the present faith of the patrimony was established in the fifth century by Polykarp, who is worshipped to this day as the Nephew of God, Elder Brother of Jesus, and First Cousin Once Removed of the Holy Ghost. The fundamentals of the Polykarpian faith are contained in the Newer Testament, including the birth, deeds, martyrdom, and resurrection of Polykarp.

“According to the Gospel of St. Einphul of Ayle, Polykarp was born to the three virgin sisters Woglinde, Wellgunde, and Flosshilde on the day the Visigoths sacked Rome. The Gospel According to St. Oned claims that Polykarp was born to St. Rheasilvia, a novice at the Convent of the Holy Foreskin, nine months after the Holy Ghost appeared there, disguised as a troop of Hunnish cavalry. Both these accounts are contained in the Newer Testament, and it is a crime punishable in the Patrimony by death to deny either of them, or to assert that they are in any way incompatible.

“According to a dubious tradition not included in the Newer Testament, and denied by the Polykarpians, Polykarp as a young man modeled his conduct after that of St. Augustine - as a young man. A hostile tradition preserved in the Temporary Roman Empire has it that a woman named Mary the Maudlin once told him, ‘On these cold winter nights you’re better than a comforter’. The tradition is plausible, because, shortly afterwards, Polykarp began to regard himself as the person whose coming was foretold in John 14:16.

“Polykarp began his career of preaching by visiting the court of the Eastern Roman Emperor Theodorus the Odorous and calling him to repentance. Theodorus responded by making Polykarp his Court Jester. Seven month later, Theodorus was overthrown and murdered by his brother-in-law Isaac Yursiti - an act which Polykarpians regard as one of divine vengeance.

“Once he was set free, Polykarp gathered about him thirteen disciples, seven women and six men. One of the women was Mary the Maudlin who, according to St. Oned, was “converted to the ways of the Holy Polykarp by the manifold virtues of his own tongue”.

“Sometime around the year 440, the Zapadoslav ruler Vataslob decreed that Polykarp and his disciples be stopped from their preaching. This led to a confrontation between the prophet and the tyrant, described thus by St. Einphul of Ayle:

'Polykarp did lead his disciples and many another person before Vataslob and his men of might.

'And did say unto the tyrant, "Wherefore dost thou let Me from walking up and down the land, preaching My Gospel unto these My people?"

'And the tyrant answered Him, saying "Thy teaching do disturb the greater number of the Tribe of Klutz, wherefore in their name I bid Thee stop, lest a worse thing happen to Thee."

'Polykarp answered unto him, saying, "Thou seest a great multitude with Me, hearkening unto My Gospel and doing My will and with thee standeth but a small number. Wherefore then dost thou act in the name of the greater number of the Tribe of Klutz?"

'And Vataslob answered unto Him, saying "Man of little vision, the Tribe of Klutz is not only they who now live, but also the mighty number of the dead who went before us, following the traditions which now Thou breakest. I bid Thee stop. in the name of this Silent Majority."

"Finding that his persuasion was of no avail, Vataslob eventually ordered Polykarp to be impaled. To this day, the Sign of the Stake is the symbol of the Polykarpian, who imitate this gesture with a finger in prayer, or at times of great emotional stress.

"Oddly, the Polykarpian gospels are relatively silent on the exact content of the teachings of Polykarp. . . .

(For the use of the above term "Silent Majority" I am indebted to Mark Blackman, who sent me a copy of a fanzine I published in 1971, when the term was frequently used in a controversy over the American invasion of Vietnam. The opposition to that war was then escalating, as pro-war politicians vainly tried to keep the war going. It was their belief that the opposition to war was the product of a loud but tiny minority, that their anti-war rallies and candidates represented only a minority of the population, and that the war was supported by a "silent majority" of Americans. Eventually it turned out that the peace movement *did* have the support of a majority of Americans, and American troops had to be withdrawn. Militarists responded by drumming up a generalized support for *all* American troops and veterans, which is why there is a suspension of every baseball game between halves of the seventh inning while the audience, often led by a serving military man or a veteran, sings "God Bless America" as if they were at a religious service. This continues for the American invasions of Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, or other places that few Americans can find on a map. There may be more, since the revival of a military draft is now being suggested. The United States has not fought a defensive war in over seventy years, nor have any American wars been declared by Congress, as the Constitution requires. Instead, in our times every American war has meant invading some other country and killing people who live there, including numerous civilians.)

## THE MINISTRY OF MISCELLANY

This is **Dagon**, a monthly fanzine of commentary on science, science fiction, fantasy, mystery novels, comic art, role-playing games (RPGs), and anything else that seems like a good idea at the moment, is published by John Boardman, O At 12716 Ginger Wood Lane, Clarksburg, MD 20871. My land-line telephone P Great number is (301) 515-4271. **Dagon** circulates through APA-Q, an amateur press E Intervals association (APA) which is edited once a month (if enough contributions come R This in) by Mark L. Blackman, Apt. 4A, 1745 E. 18th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11229. A Appears T To The copy count for APA-Q is 15 print copies.

I Inflammation **Dagon** also goes to others who have indicated an interest in its subject O Optic matter. Subscriptions are 10 issues for \$10 in the United States, and for \$25 N Nerves elsewhere. I also trade with other amateur publications.

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# 2225 Very early in the morning of Monday 24 July, my granddaughter Melissa was delivered in Frederick of her second child, a daughter who has been named Alisia. Melissa is my only grandchild who lives within easy reach of my daughter Deirdre and myself. Alisia weighed in at 2.77 kilograms, or 6 lbs. 1.8 ounces in medieval measurements. She is the younger sister of Elliána, Perdita's and my first great-grandchild. Elliána completed kindergarten in June, and will be starting first grade this fall in Frederick. She will be six years old on 5 December.

I got my first look at Alisia on Friday 4 August, when a number of errands took Deirdre and me to Frederick. I had not seen Alisia earlier because we wanted her to first get a few shots to protect her from any ailments that we might be carrying.

Perdita's vascular dementia is overwhelming more of her mind, which is evident every time Deirdre and I visit her. Its cause is different from that of Alzheimer's disease, but its effects appear to be very much the same. She is getting much better care in the nursing home in Frederick, than Deirdre and I would be capable of giving her.

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This issue of **Dagon** will (I hope) be completed in the first two weeks of August, and if Deirdre's schedule allows of it, I expect to get it printed before we leave for Charleston to see the total solar eclipse which will be visible there (weather permitting) on Monday 21 August. Deirdre has been fortunate in arranging our travels, and rented us a house in Charleston just before they became unavailable on account of the heavy demand for them during the eclipse.

That will be our second weekend of travel in August. On the weekend of 11-14 August, Anthony and Karen and their two small children will be up this way to visit us and Melissa and her family. They will also attend the wedding of Karen's cousin. (The Montgomery County (MD) Fair will take place in Gaithersburg on 11-19 August, and if its schedule accommodates

ours, we may also visit it.) Then the weekend of 18-21 August will include the date of the eclipse, which we will see from Charleston, SC. Anthony will be on duty in Raleigh on the 21st, but perhaps Karen and the children might be able to come to Charleston to see the eclipse. By the time most **Dagon** readers get this issue, the eclipse and most of these travels will very likely have already taken place.

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The *Washington Post* of 2 August 2017 carries an article by Michelle Singletary about a problem connected with the eclipse. Unfortunately, the article begins with a problem of its own. She began it with several inaccurate statements:

“For the first time in nearly a century, on Aug. 21, a total eclipse of the sun will be visible in parts of the contiguous United States. Depending on where you live, and provided the clouds don’t interfere, you will see the sun partially or, if you’re fortunate enough to be in the “path of totality”, completely disappear behind the moon.”

I have seen two total eclipses of the sun in the United States since Singletary’s date of “nearly a century ago”. One was in 1954 near Minneapolis, and the other was in 1963 on Mt. Desert Island, Maine. The parts of their tracks within the United States were not as long as that of this year’s eclipse, and in at least the 1963 case the track had a greater length through Canada than in this country,

The rest of Singletary’s article dealt with the importance of protecting your eyes if you plan to observe the eclipse directly. She warned that some people were improperly labeling dark glasses as safe for using them to view the eclipse, and that even the darkest sunglasses would be inadequate to protect your eyes if you look at the Sun through them. However, considering her inaccuracies with other topics related to the eclipse, I would suggest seeking out another source for more accurate information on this point.

For a much larger part of the United States, this eclipse will be seen as partial rather than total. On Washington, for example, about 70% of the Sun will be covered at maximum exposure.

The United States Postal “Service” has issued a “Forever” stamp, which currently sells for 49¢ each, to mark this eclipse. It shows a totally eclipsed Sun, and comes in sheets of 16 stamps each. On the back of each sheet is a map of the part of the eclipse track which lies within the coterminous United States.

And, of course, there are also people who regard this eclipse as a religious rather than a scientific event. A Protestant minister named Gary Ray plans to lead an expedition to a hill in eastern Oregon, where the eclipse will be seen as total. Ray has claimed, in an evangelical publication called *Unsealed*, that “The Bible says a number of times that there’s going to be signs in the heavens before Jesus Christ returns to earth.” And a reactionary sect of Roman Catholics,

that has broken with the Vatican and calls itself "The Society of St. Pius X", has gone even further. They believe that Pope Urban VIII was right in his famous 17th-century controversy with Galileo, that the Earth is fixed in the center of the universe, and that the Sun goes around the Earth.

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The July issue of **CAR-PGa Newsletter**, the monthly publication of the Committee for the Advancement of RPGs (Role-Playing Games), leads off with a long article by W. A. Hawke-Robinson, which is actually the script of "a short video (which) briefly summarizes the concepts of Concentration, Immersion, and Flow State, including examples from sports and...RPGs ." The article is an introduction and script for a video report on the "key topics of Flow theory". Its complexities make me glad I did not, and could not, require lab reports of this type from my physics students at the City University of New York.

Readers of **CAR-PGa Newsletter** are urged to send announcements of upcoming gaming events, and reports of recent RPG conventions which they have attended. These reports should be sent to David Millians, the editor of the **CAR-PGa Newsletter**. For a subscription to **CAR-PGa Newsletter**, send \$1.50 a copy or \$15.00 a year to David Millians, Paideia School, 1509 Ponce de Leon Avenue, Atlanta, GA 30307 or <millians,david @paideiaschool.org>. (For foreign readers that is \$2.25 a copy or \$20.00 a year.)

**Dagon #690 (APA-Q #601)**  
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