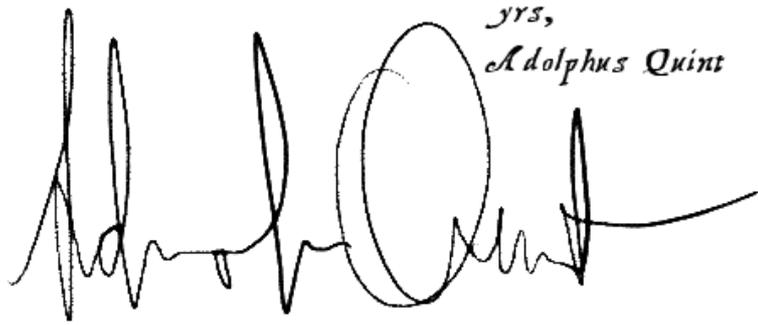




The Active Dominions

Greetings, fellow seekers of knowledge! The Librarian has commissioned me, the redoubtable sage and explorer Adolphus Quint, to illumine in some small measure those Dominions which remain free in large part from the Shifting and hence form the Kingdom of Corvantin

*yrs,
Adolphus Quint*



Permit me, if you will, to take you on a whirlwind journey around the protected heartland of our great Kingdom of Corvantin! Travel with me, and I shall tell you in brief of the core Dominions which make up the pure and uncorrupted heartland. Of those Dominions lost beneath the malevolent will and influence of that most dreadful scourge known as The Shifting, I shall not speak on this joyful day, but save those sad and lamentable tidings for another, darker day.

While I will address each Dominion in more detail in their individual Gazetteer, it is to be hoped that the snippets contained herein will be sufficient to whet ones appetite and provide the briefest glimmer of understanding of our glorious kingdom!

Aesilon:

The heartland of the Kingdom of Corvantin! The only Dominion without a border to that dreadful wind of change born on the Shifting, Aesilon stands as a bastion of purity and enlightenment for all the subjects of His Most August Majesty. I could wax lyrical about the glories and wonders of this Dominion for hours – indeed, on occasions I have! – but I shall endeavour to limit myself to the briefest details.



First and foremost, Aesilon is home to the capitol of the Kingdom, Helikon. Always a centre of learning and progress, Helikon was originally home to the College of Enlightenment. Over time, the city grew around the College to match the increasing prestige of its attendees.

Entire noble families relocated from around

wider Corvantin to be close to this centre of learning and magic, and the peasant population followed their masters.

As part of the agreement for aid struck with King Corbrey I, following the Unification, Helikon was named as the Capital city, and the royal family was relocated there. Once again, the population surged as all those seeking influence and an ear at court followed the Crown, and Helikon is now one of the most prosperous cities in all the Kingdom.

The Five Churches of Enlightenment, unwilling to lose their grip and influence, also relocated their prime cathedrals to Helikon, although they have left the chapter houses of the militant orders in their original cities. Helikon is also home to the chapter house of the Order of the Gryphon, ensuring that those most loyal and prestigious servants of the Crown are available at short notice, should their services be required.

Outside of Helikon, Aesilon boasts a number of smaller towns and villages. The land is fertile, and is one of the few self-sufficient Dominions, with the pride that not relying on Fallowmere engenders.

Aesilon is bordered by Arador to the North, Breslyn to the East, Scarrow to the South, and Chasco to the West. It is also bordered by (and fed by tributaries of) the mighty Heartsurge River and Perrivelle River. Those blessed enough to be born in this Dominion refer to themselves as Aesilonians.

Arador:



ARADOR

Arador is a military force second only to Scarrow, and with a much greater tradition of chivalry and respect than that squabbling nation. Sharing borders with a large number of

Dominions and fiefdoms, Arador always had to maintain a strong military presence to deter any would-be conquerors, and that readiness served it well when The Shifting first hit, enabling King

Corbrey I the forces and prowess required to enforce stability and forge a union out of the disparate and desperate fiefdoms.

More than any other Dominion, Arador is tied tightly to the Crown and the hegemony based out of Aesilon – indeed, at one point Arador nearly absorbed the far-smaller Aesilon entirely and it was only by the mercy and grace of King Corbrey I that Aesilon remained an independent Dominion. The Aradorian tongue has become the linguistic standard across the Kingdom, and it is no surprise that Aradorian names are the most common, even amongst the most rebellious Dominions.

Arador is neatly sandwiched between the lost fiefdom of Wenneslund to the North, Ticano and Fallowmere to the East, Breslyn to the South, and Aesilon to the South-West. The main western border of Arador is taken up by the imposing and dense Jarengar Forest, from which all manner of unspeakably altered animal life burst forth on a depressingly regular basis, searching for prey and, presumably, a swift and merciful death. Despite all that, a goodly portion of the forest remain unShifted, allowing the training of rangers and woodsmen second in skill only to the bloodline clans of Chasco.

The capitol of Arador is Blackwall Keep, a mighty bastion built in the last days of the La'tieri Empire and rebuilt and expanded many times since then. Since the Eruption and the chaos that caused, a vast shanty town formed outside the defensive walls of Blackwall Keep, which has – over time – become a more permanent settlement, expanding the size of Blackwall Keep over several miles. This city – known ironically as Walltown – is well regarded to be a haven for crime and corruption, where the lower orders barter for forbidden goods and life is as cheap as the grimmest sell-sword.

Breslyn:

Breslyn commands the northern half of the mighty Lake Perrivelle, the largest body of water still accessible to the Kingdom. It maintains a vast fishing fleet, many of whom style themselves on the ancient (and, in my humble



BRESLYN

scholars opinion, badly remembered) legends of the piratical buccaneers of lore, dressing flamboyantly and constantly making colloquial references and the like designed, no doubt, simply to baffle

and confuse the outside ear.

Breslyn shares the waters of Lake Perrivelle with the squabbling city-states of the far-larger Dominion of Croxin to the South. Indeed, the only reason Breslyn manages to not only survive but prosper in the face of this rivalry is because – oft times – the children running the city-states of Croxin are too busy fighting each other to focus all their attention on their upstart Northern neighbour. That said, hostilities are frequent, and should Breslyn ships encounter Croxin ships while fishing, blood will undoubtedly be shed.

The King keeps an extremely watchful eye on the disputes of Breslyn and Croxin, and has – more than once – threatened to step in should the rivalries increase in substance and seriousness.

The capital of Breslyn is the port city of Tanner's Hook – a sprawling and ill-cultured settlement following a natural promontory into the Lake and spreading along the banks like an illness. Where Walltown in Arador suffers under the lawlessness and bickering of its slovenly inhabitants, Tanner's Hook positively thrives on it. It is widely rumoured that House Tanner – the founding noble house and home of the current Princes – has constant interest in the black market and fills the family coffers with their cut. However, these are only rumours, and no-one yet has managed to prove any wrongdoing to the satisfaction of the Courts.

Chasco:

Chasco is one of the smaller dominions, yet one of the most geographically diverse. It is bordered on the West by the imposing and mighty Cairnwrack Mountains, and the mines found therein provide Chasco with a great deal of

wealth and influence.

The Cairnwracks gradually reduce along the North-Western border to the heavily-forested Neran Foothills, which in turn becomes the mighty Jarengar Forest to the North.



CHASCO

All of these landmarks are at least partially buried beneath the Shifting, and so while Chasco may not face the twisted hordes threatening, for example, Scarrow, there is ample danger still extant from the beasts of forest and mountain who have been affected by the insidious influence of the changing mists.

To the East, along the Heartsurge River, Chasco shares a border with the beacon of civilisation that is Aesilon, and to the South it borders the warlike and savage Dominion of Scarrow.

Chasco has always been a somewhat independent and rustic Dominion, seen as backwater and primitive by those in more enlightened and educated places, but this is an unfair judgement. In the folksy wisdom of the Chascons there lies a certain simplicity of spirit and life which may be seen as missing in the aesthetically pure corridors of, for example, Aesilon. They do have a connection with the land and its moods that more advanced peoples may lack, that cannot be denied.

The capital of Chasco is Tolmerand, which – in stark contrast to the humble mannerisms of its inhabitants – is an imposing and beautiful structure found intact and raised by a civilisation lost to the depths of history. The swirling spires and gentle swells of Tolmerand strike a primal chord, and lend a beauty to the rustic settings and manners of the Chascons.

Croxin:

It is only natural that I should now turn my eye onto the Dominion of Croxin. United only in name, Croxin is less a Dominion and more a loose affiliation of disgruntled city-states. Rather



CROXIN

than having one ruling family, each city-state has a collection of “noble” houses, and may elect one Autarch. This Autarch sits on the Council of Autarchs and – between them – enact Crown policies and decisions

while frantically attempting not to go to war against each other. Again.

The history of Croxin is a history of petty squabbles, border disputes, trade disagreements and childish spats, characterised primarily by the loss of innocent life. Given the eclectic and enthusiastic make-up of this Dominion, it is hardly surprising that instead of a single standing army, each city-state recruits its forces from the fanatically loyal militia of each settlement, bolstered by mercenary forces. By last count, there are at least 6 active mercenary companies in Croxin, occasionally fighting both sides of the same conflict.

Needless to say, the King keeps a very close eye and strong hand on the disputes, and the Autarchs know that should things develop to the point where taxes and produce fall, then they are facing the full wrath of the Crown and all of its resources.

In addition to squabbling with each other, the city-states of Croxin also hold a fierce rivalry with their sister-Dominion of Breslyn, with whom it shares control of the great Lake Perrivelle. Croxin is also bordered to the East by Fallowmere and the West by Scarrow. Croxin is also one of the few remaining coastal Dominions – albeit due to the virulence and proliferation of the Shifting Croxin is neatly severed from the sea and any escape.

It will doubtless come as no surprise – astute as you are – that those from Croxin do not identify themselves as Croxites, or Croxonions, or any other such torturous derivatives. Instead, they refer to themselves depending on the city-state they hail from. Indeed, confusing a person from x with someone from y is a grave insult and will likely result in bloodshed, so beware! Each city-

state was founded both on location but also on their specialised trade, and it will come as no surprise, given that, that each of the noble families from which the Autarchs are drawn developed from the merchant Guilds which originally ruled here – a distinction which causes the “pure-blooded” nobles of other Dominions to sneer at their lineage.

The seven city-states, along with their original specialities, are:

Buford – a fishing city-state along the banks of Lake Perrivelle. They specialise in deep-water fishing and smoked fish, as well as an extremely potent pipe-weed. A resident of Buford is generally known as a Bufordian.

Pewtrelle – also a fishing city-state, Pewtrelle commands the largest of the Croxin fleets and focuses almost exclusively on that. Residents of Pewtrelle are, unsurprisingly, Pewtrellians.

Athergan – Athergan chooses to specialise in mineral wealth, sited as it is not far from a number of ore veins and mines. While there are some jewellers and gem smiths in Athergan, more commonly found are blacksmiths and smelters. Those who call Athergan home refer to themselves as Athergites.

Plex – while Athergan mines the earth and works the products, Plex chooses to focus on more cerebral arts. Plex is home to the Guild of Alchemists, and they are so bold as to attempt to challenge even the august College of Enlightenment in their philosophic ramblings. Many scientists, artists and poets call Plex home and, were it not for their mastery of extremely inventive and nasty war machines and combat alchemy, it is likely this city of dreamers would have been rolled under many years ago. Those from Plex call themselves Plexi.

Kumm – those from Kumm have absolutely no sense of humour about the name of their city-state, or the name they refer to themselves by (Kummers, if you can believe it.) I warn you fair and square that to mock them is to invite a gross physical discourtesy quite unconnected to any suggested act. Probably driven by their name,

Kumm focuses on siege engines, war machines and military tactics. Their artillerists are in demand throughout Croxin and wider Corvantin. They also do a fair trade in woodwork and joinery, doubtless as a side effect of their martial focus.

Saffos – one of the more civilised city-states by comparison, Saffos specialises in works of art of all forms – jewellery, painting, crafts and the like. This search for perfection can be found in all aspects of Saffos culture, and I am lead to believe that their flesh-houses are as renowned as their galleries. Those from Saffos refer to themselves as Saffites.

Tork-Welsby – Tork-Welsby is a very unusual city-state, dominated as it is by two core populations. Originally, Welsby was a small city-state which specialised in spices, herbs and the fruits of the land. Welsby has extensive farmland, and also does a fine trade in racing horses and the like. Tork was a city-state along the coast, which made its money from deep-sea fishing, whaling and (it is rumoured) piracy. When the Shifting first Erupted, the noble family and much of the population, warned by a prophetic dream, packed their belongings and moved inland to the first place they found. The more martial inhabitants of Tork completely overwhelmed the defences of Welsby, and forcibly united the two into one whole city-state. Although many, many years have passed, this still causes a number of tensions within Tork-Welsby, especially amongst the older families. Most inhabitants call themselves Torksmen (or Torkswomen) although a few hard line recidivists still use the archaic phrase Welsban.

Fallowmere:

Fallowmere is the largest remaining intact Dominion, but for all that, it is one of the least remarkable. Fallowmere is the bread-basket of Corvantin, and the lion's share of all food – be that crops or cattle – can be found within the borders of Fallowmere. While it does have a large border to the Shifting, unlike other Dominions which struggle with that, the border is relatively quiet. This is likely due to the fact that Fallowmere is quite protected,

geographically.

All along the South and Eastern borders of Fallowmere lie a relatively thin barrier of the Shifting, followed by the coastline and, with the absence of sea-based raiding, these borders are fairly quiet. The Stormcove Mountains, to the North-East provide a natural barrier to any depredations from the lost fiefdom of Crayle, and while they do share a border along the North with the lost fiefdom of Ticano, Ticano itself was a very small fiefdom and – for the present, at least – presents a fairly quiet front. Fallowmere shares the Western border with Arador, Breslyn and Croxin, and has some limited access to Lake Perrivelle, but most inhabitants of Fallowmere leave the lake and it's conflicts to other Dominions.



All in all, Fallowmere is a sleepy Dominion of rolling fields of crops, vast herds of cows, and little else. Unsurprisingly, it does not host a standing army of its own, preferring to hire mercenary groups from Croxin when defence is needed or, at worse, a few units of troops from Arador to quell any disturbance from Ticano.

The capitol of Fallowmere is Shawgate – a city founded on the intersection of the major trade routes of Fallowmere, and home to the Great Market – a vast, never-ending trade fair and celebration where everything can be purchased or traded, and commerce is king. Unlike Tanner's Hook, the Great Market tends toward the legal side of trade, although deals can be done if you know where to look.

Those hailing from this pacific Dominion tend to call themselves Fallowmen, with the term used in a gender-neutral fashion. Indeed, it is something of an ironic name, given that Fallowmere is utterly dominated by the women, who take care of all business and run the households and guilds, leaving the men to merely do the hard labour.

Scarrow:



SCARROW

Scarrow is a barbaric and warlike Dominion, which has always been a thorn in the side of the Kingdom. Following the fall of the fabled La'tieri Empire, where the fiefdoms gathered

together in search of peace and progress, Scarrow resisted. The feared Reavers patrolled the seas, looting and burning the neighbouring fiefdoms, and Scarrow was at almost constant war with its neighbouring fiefdom of Darkeil – a conflict that still rages today, even though Darkeil be lost beneath the malevolent and roiling influence of the Shifting.

Scarrow was also the last Dominion to agree to the Unification under King Corbrey I, and indeed, many of the first police actions of the Order of the Gryphon were used to put down insurrections in Scarrow. They were also the last Dominion to relinquish their own tongue and embrace the universal Aradorian language. They also tend to use their own titles and terms within the military and noble families rather the more widely accepted terms across the Kingdom.

This incivility and belligerence is not restricted to outside citizens – indeed, some of the gravest offences were inflicted upon their own people. Following the Eruption, any who Shifted were immediately put to death. It took the fall of Jarl Wyre and his elite huscarls to the Shifting before this practise was stopped. Scarrow still remains the least friendly and receptive Dominion to those who Shift, generally offering them a stark choice – exile, death, or service in the military unto death or distinguishment.

The terrain of Scarrow reflects the attitude of its inhabitants to perfection, in that it is rough, inhospitable and dangerous. To the west, Scarrow is border by the lost fiefdom of Darkeil, and despite the changes wrought by the Shifting the poor twisted inhabitants of that fiefdom continue to wage constant war along that border.

6

While the North-West edge of that border is framed by the Cairnwrack Mountains, that poses cold comfort, as many warped creatures rampage down from the crags and passes to wreak havoc in the Northern areas.

The far Northern border is shared with both Chasco and the more pacific Aesilon, from which the heavy hand of the King remains ever poised, should the current Jarl decide to act out again. The Eastern border is shared entirely with Croxin, who the Scarrowites tend to leave to their own devices, save to provide mercenary troops when funds are needed for their own war effort. To the South is the coast and the sea, thankfully cut off from their Reavers and their quietest border.

The capitol of Scarrow is Hvelstad, a sprawling collection of houses, fortifications, farms and dwellings covering the least inhospitable centre of Scarrow. A city in name if not in appearance, it is more accurately a large number of smaller settlements and villages united more by proximity than by design.

In Conclusion:

Well, my friends, I hope that my tour of the core Dominions of our brave and beautiful Kingdom has opened your eyes and informed you of those places and people whom you may not yet have met. While each Dominion is as different from each other as I am from you, it is to be hoped that you now know more than you did whence you came here.

For more information on these Dominions, the people therein, and the organisations which call each Dominion home, I would beg of thee to peruse my individual Gazetteers, which will ideally illuminate and instruct you in the specifics of each of the Dominions from whence civilisation hails.

With regards,

Adolphus Quint, Purple Sage of Arador.

6