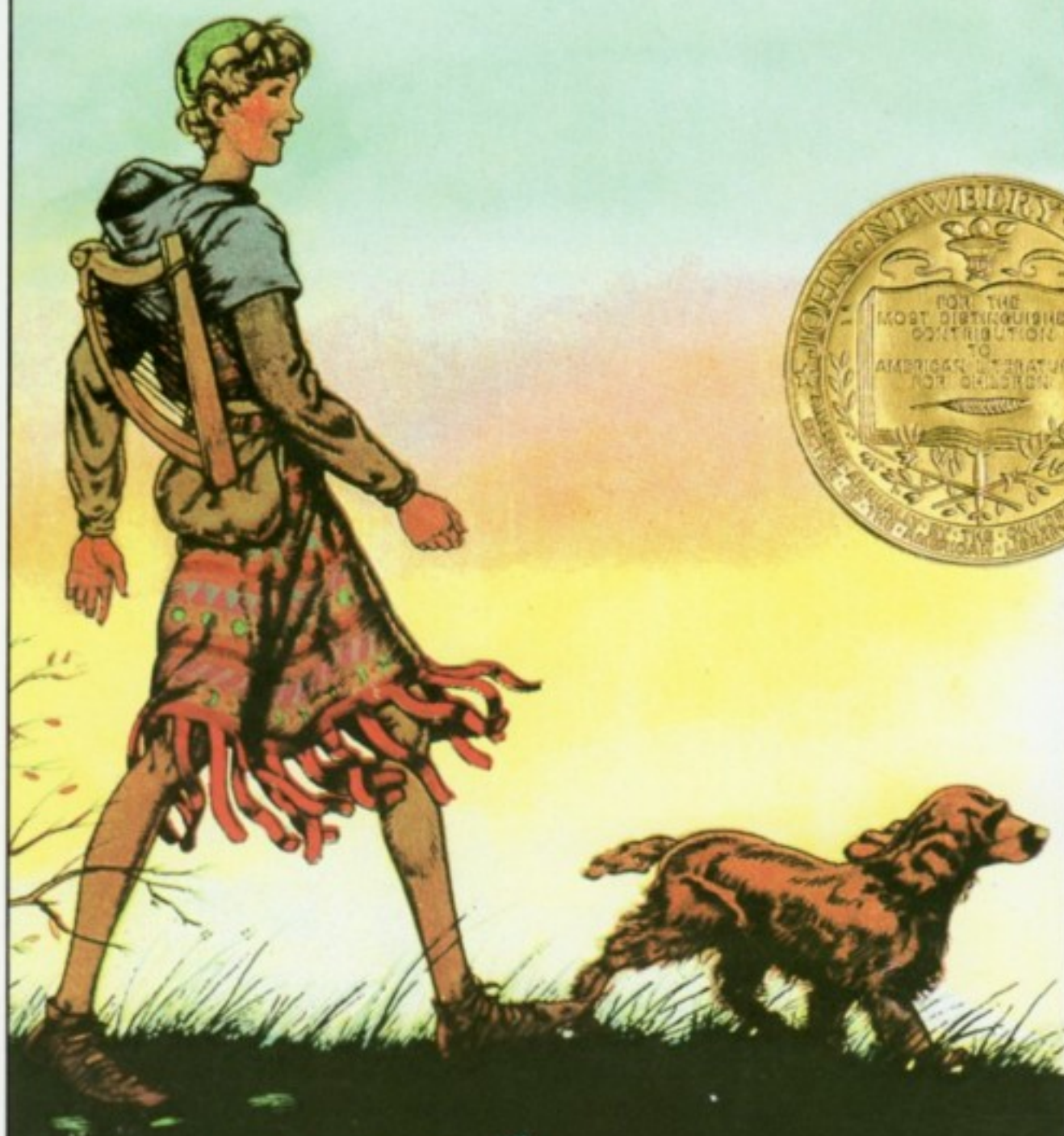




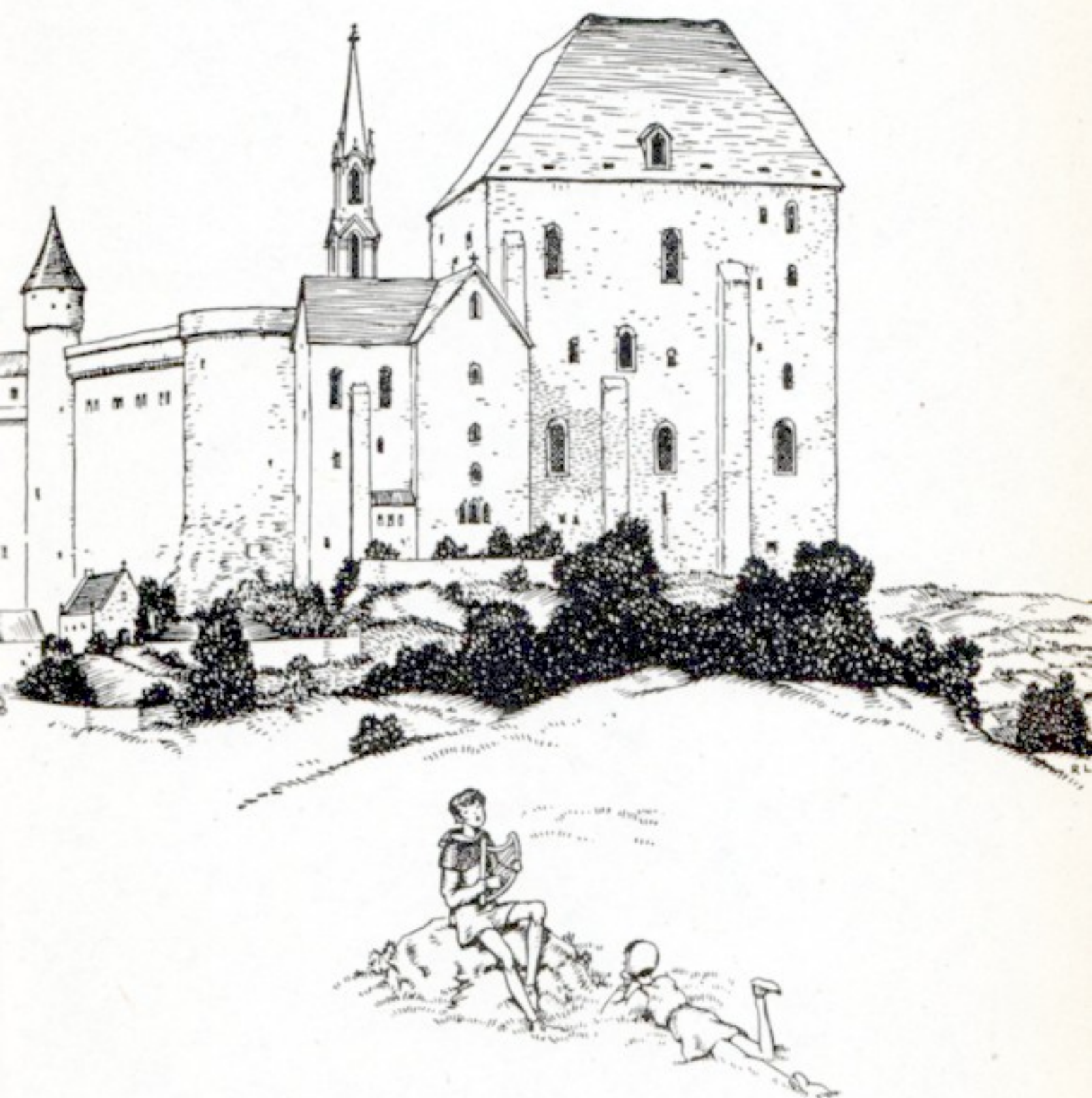
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# Adam of the Road

ELIZABETH JANET GRAY





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ADAM

# Adam

**A**FTER a May as gray and cold as December, June came in, that year of 1294, sunny and warm and full of birds and blossoms and all the other happy things the songs praise May for. Adam Quartermayne, who had been looking for his father ever since Easter, thought that now he would surely come. Every morning when he rolled out of his bed in the long dormitory where the school boys slept, he said to himself, "Today he's coming! I know it!" and every night, disappointed but not daunted, he put himself to sleep making up stories about how his father would come next day.

Sometimes he made him come just at the end of choir practice, sometimes at the beginning of the lesson in grammar, sometimes in the middle of dinner when the boys ate their meat and pottage in silence while a master read aloud in Latin from the lives of the saints. However Adam's stories began, they all ended with Roger the minstrel taking Adam right out of school. Across the courtyard they would go striding, Adam with his own harp over his shoulder and his father's viol under his arm; through the



gateway they would pass and over the river to the highway that led to London and all the wide, free world.

It was a famous school that the monks kept in the Abbey of St. Alban, but Adam had had enough of it. Five long months ago his father had left him there while he himself went to France, to the minstrels' school held in Lent each year at Cambrai, where he would learn new romances to tell to the lords and ladies of England.

Roger Quartermayne was no ordinary minstrel, picking up an uncertain penny telling rough yarns in inn-yards and market places, filling in gaps in his memory with juggling and tumbling and piping as the poorer sort did. He could play the viol; he could chant long romances in French about King Alisaunder, or Charlemagne and his knights, or the British King Arthur and the search for the Holy Grail. He was welcome at manor houses and at great feasts in castles, and everywhere people gave him rich gifts, a length of cloth for a surcoat, a purse full of silver pennies, or a gold clasp to fasten his mantle. He went attended by a boy to carry his viol and to sing with him when there were songs in the tales or harp a little in the interludes, and that boy, from his eighth birthday till his eleventh last February, had been Roger's son Adam.

So Adam watched eagerly for his father and talked endlessly about him to the other boys in school. He always spoke of him as Roger the minstrel, as if everyone must



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*Cover illustration by Robert Lawson*

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