

## Bartholomew's Letter

King Derwin's Castle  
Kingdom of Didd  
20th year of King Derwin's Reign

Dear Scholars in a Foreign Land,

Right now I'm in a corner of the King's Great Hall, and the chaplain is giving instruction to two other pages and myself. I am very lucky in that I am being instructed in reading, writing, and, of course, manners and knightly behavior. I can hardly believe I'm here. (Actually how I got here is a very long story. You probably wouldn't believe it!) Anyway, I'm not the son of a noble. I'm a son of a free peasant! (See, I told you that you wouldn't believe it.) I'm now supposed to be learning about the wider world and how people in foreign lands live.

Since I would like you to tell me a little bit about how you live, I'll start with how I lived when I was growing up, for I lived in the village until the age of 8. My village was next to a cranberry bog. We lived in a hut with a roof made out of straw called thatch. It usually kept the rain out, but you had to be careful because, after a while, birds, mice, and snakes would live there too. Sometimes it made our house pretty messy. Anyway, some of the villagers were farmers and planted wheat or barley and brought it to the mill, of course, to have it ground to flour. We had to trade for flour, otherwise, Dad, Mum, and I usually ate (and sometimes took to market) the cranberries from the bog, fish from the stream, and other things we could trap or catch. We did have a few chickens for eggs and one sheep we kept on the common. On holidays, like The Day of King Derwin's Great and Glorious Birth, we'd kill one of the chickens and really have a feast. Yummy!

We worked pretty hard, but sometimes in the village there would be a fair, and tinkers would come and sell metal pots and pans (which we could not afford to buy) and merchants would sell wool to spin for clothing. I once saw a dancing bear there, and jugglers, acrobats, and musicians! It was very exciting!

What is it like where you live? Do you ever get to eat anything as good as chicken or do you just pick berries and chives for things to eat? Do you have any time for fun, like on The Day of King Derwin's Great and Glorious Birth, or do you work all year long?

The priest says it's time for me to run an errand for Lady Eleanor. Please write back and tell me about you and where you live! Otherwise I'll be considered a numskull and have to be a page forever and never get to become a squire.

Your obedient servant,  
Bartholomew Cubbins