

INSIDE STORY

A MEDIEVAL CASTLE

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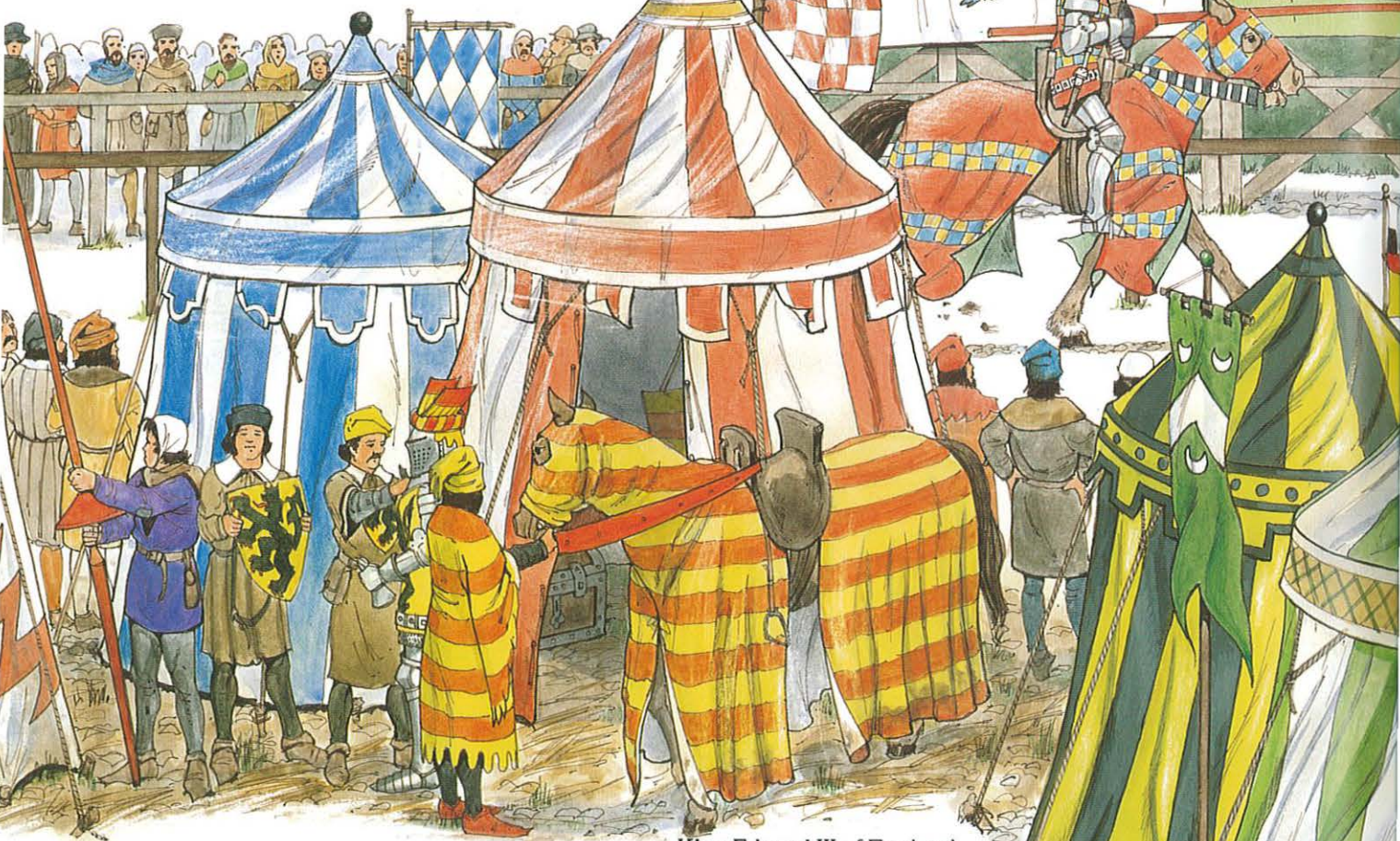
PETER BEDRICK BOOKS
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TOURNAMENTS

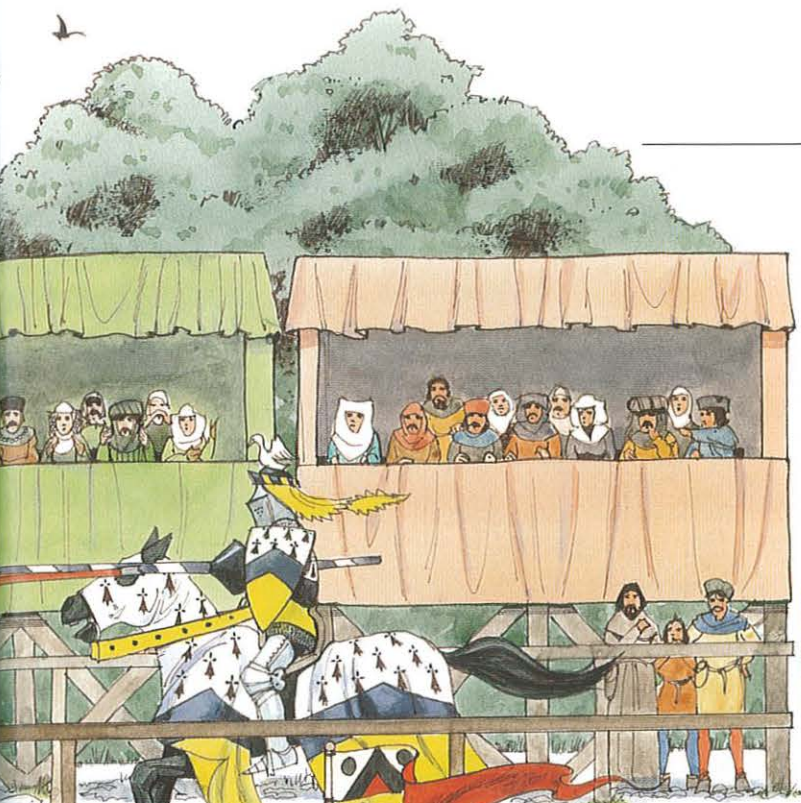
From the 12th to the 14th centuries, tournaments, or mock battles, were a favourite entertainment for lords and their ladies. They were magnificent occasions, staged in front of a glittering audience of kings, bishops and ladies from the royal court.

Tournaments were both a way of practising for real warfare, and an elaborate, although at times deadly, game. Knights either fought in teams

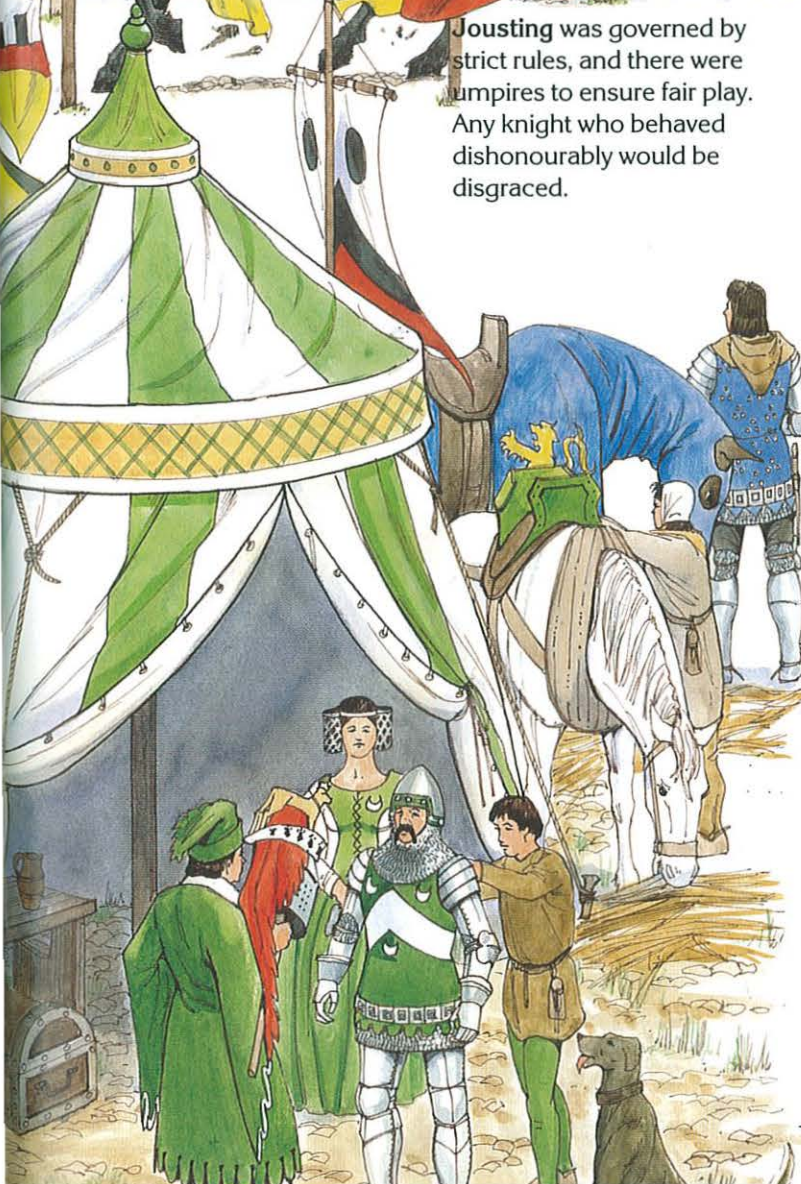


(called a *mêlée*), or in single combat (the joust). Even though combatants charged at one another with shortened lances and blunted swords, it was still quite common for them to be maimed or killed in accidents. Lords and ladies liked tournaments because they provided the chance to display everything they considered to be most important in life: membership of a noble family, skill in fighting and bravery against all odds, glamorous clothing which showed off their wealth, and obedience to a noble code of love and honour.

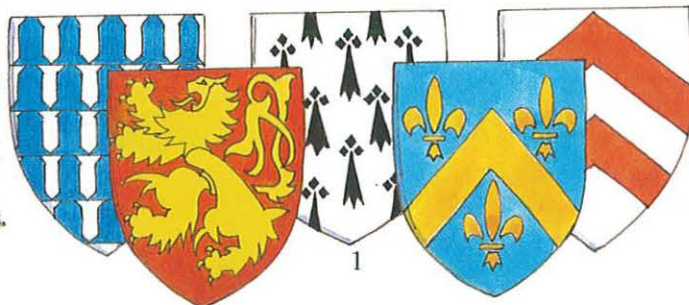
King Edward III of England was a great fighter, and very fond of tournaments. Accompanied by his eldest sons, he sometimes entered them in disguise. In 1343, he spent the equivalent of \$7,400 per day on living expenses, except on days when he held a tournament. Then he spent the equivalent of \$157,000 on prizes, tents, horses, food and drink, and wages.



Jousting was governed by strict rules, and there were umpires to ensure fair play. Any knight who behaved dishonourably would be disgraced.



Real war was horrible, and anything but a game. Armour and padded jerkins could both be pierced by barbed arrows which tore into the flesh. Limbs could be hacked off and bellies ripped open by lances and swords. Knights were killed by falls from horses; foot-soldiers were trampled to death under their hooves. Captives were ruthlessly murdered, unless they were wealthy and could pay a good ransom.



Right
Arms and armour used at a 15th-century tournament, taken from a book written by René of Anjou c.1460:

1. Heraldic crest. Originally, crests and shields (above) were badges used to identify knights wearing complete suits of armour. Later, they became highly-valued symbols of membership of the noble class.
2. Cuirass or sleeveless coat of armour, pierced with holes to lighten its weight. Battle armour weighed about 55 pounds.
3. Armguards made of specially treated leather.
4. Metal tips of tournament lances were splayed, so that they would do less damage.
5. Wooden mace.
6. Blunted sword.
7. Bassinet helmet.
8. A leather tournament cap with an iron spike fixed on top, to hold the knight's crest.

