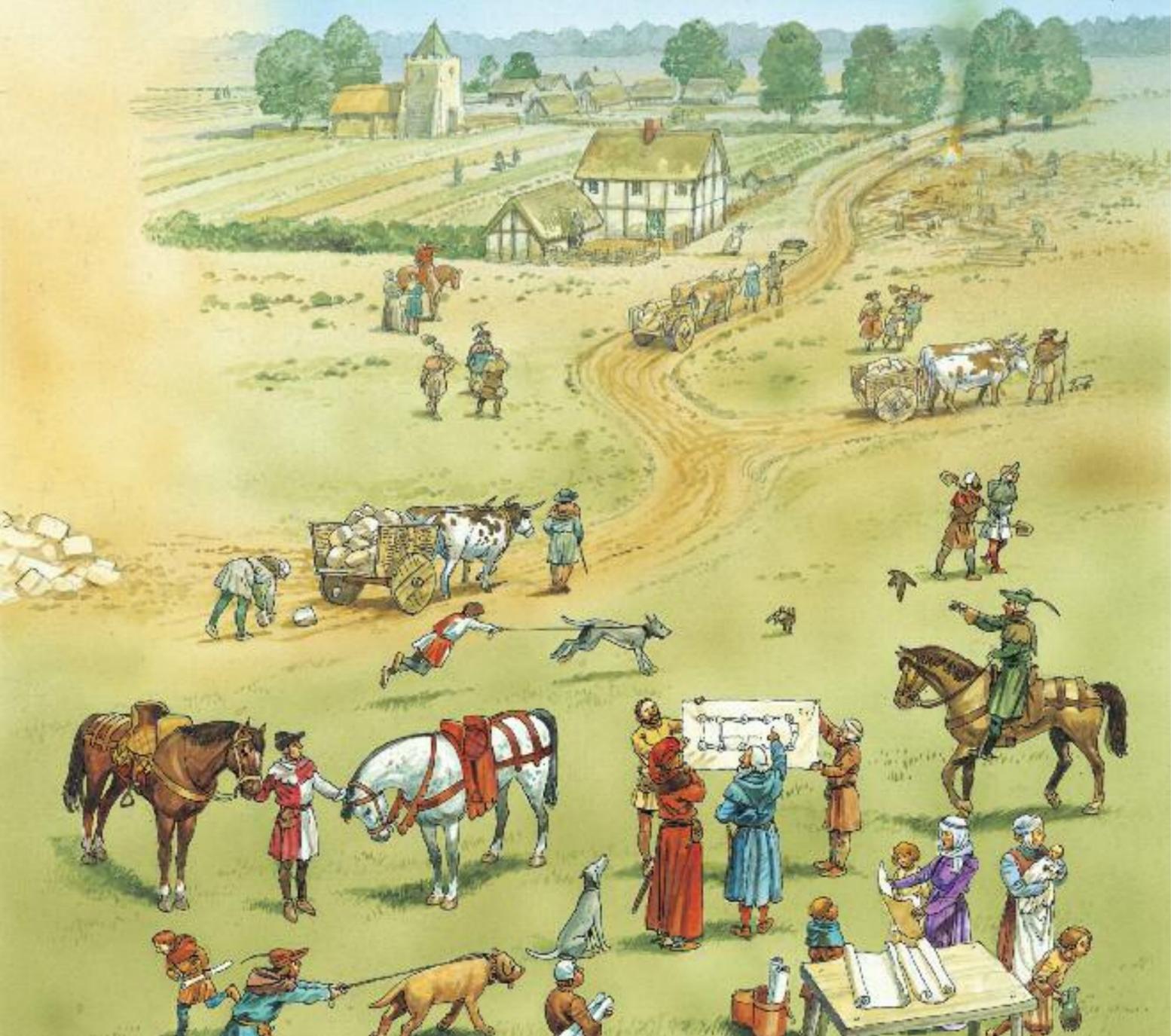
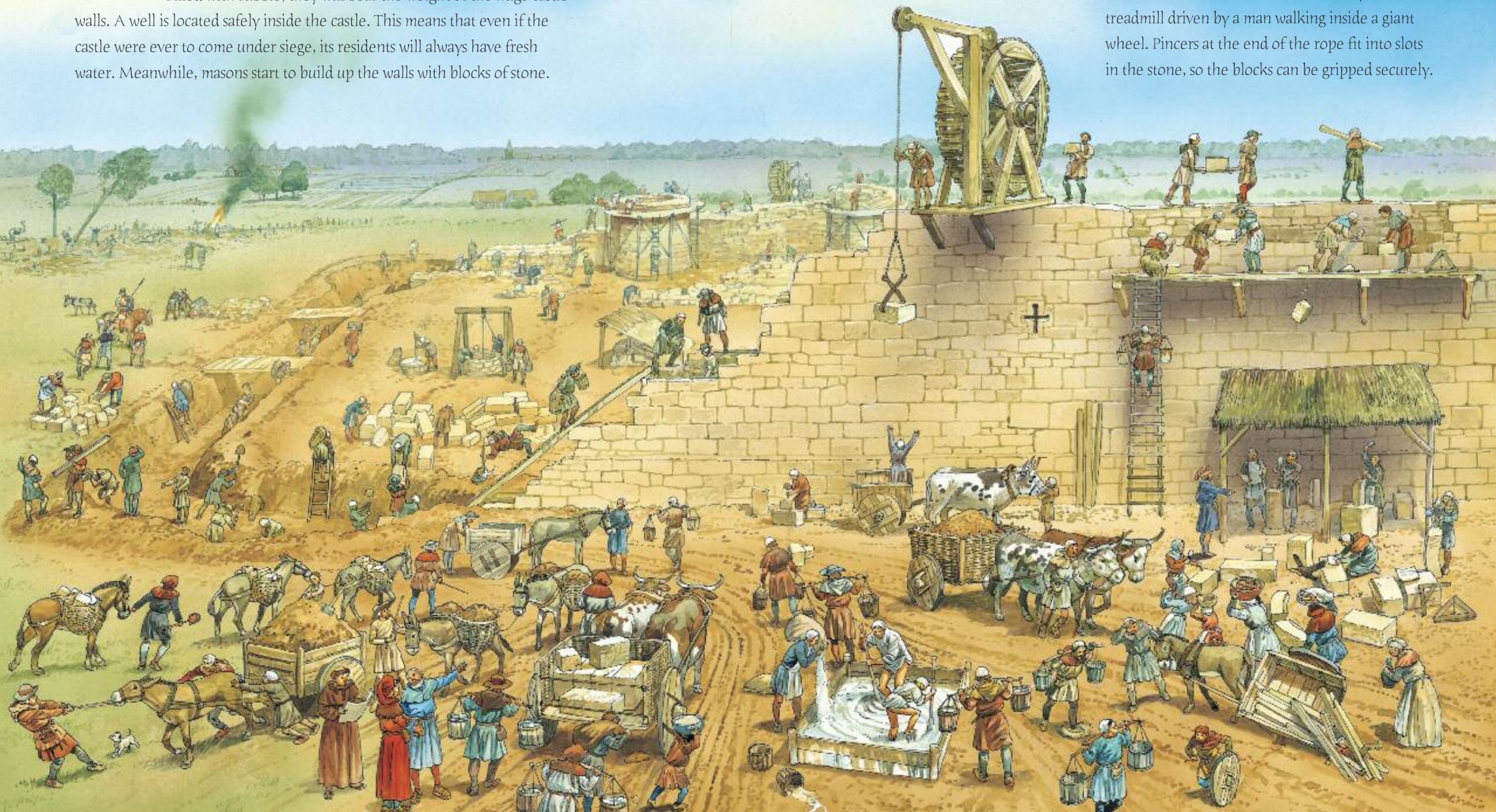


The baron has been given a piece of land by the King, in exchange for his services in war. It is an ideal spot to build a home for himself, his family and his followers. It will be no ordinary home, but a castle: a stronghold to protect him from his enemies. A local village and cropfields mean that workers and food supplies will be easy to come by. Nearby trees can be felled for timber. Another castle once stood on this spot. The stone from its ruins makes the perfect building material.



The baron appoints a master mason to oversee the building of the castle. It will have thick outer walls and rounded towers. The baron and his family will live in one of the towers. First of all, trenches are built for the castle's foundations. Filled with rubble, they will bear the weight of the huge castle walls. A well is located safely inside the castle. This means that even if the castle were ever to come under siege, its residents will always have fresh water. Meanwhile, masons start to build up the walls with blocks of stone.

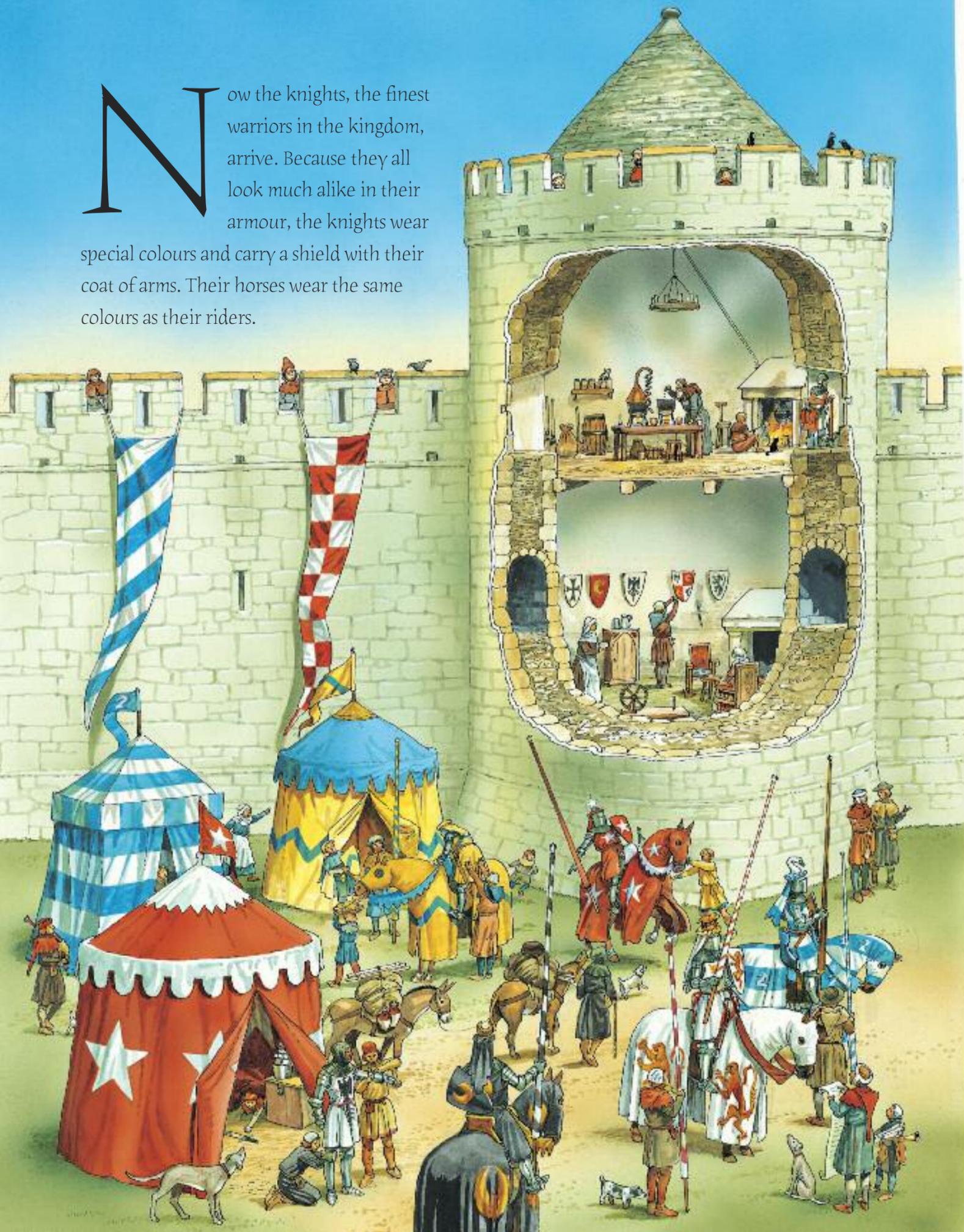
Blocks are fixed in position with mortar, a mixture of sand, lime and water stirred together in a large wooden trough. The walls are made by packing rubble and mortar between two outer layers of stones. The heaviest blocks are raised by a treadmill driven by a man walking inside a giant wheel. Pincers at the end of the rope fit into slots in the stone, so the blocks can be gripped securely.





On the morning of the tournament, the castle is decorated with bright banners. Squires put up tents for the arrival of their masters, the knights, who will compete against one another. The squires polish armour, sharpen weapons and care for the knights' horses. They practise their own jousting skills by charging at a wooden shield.

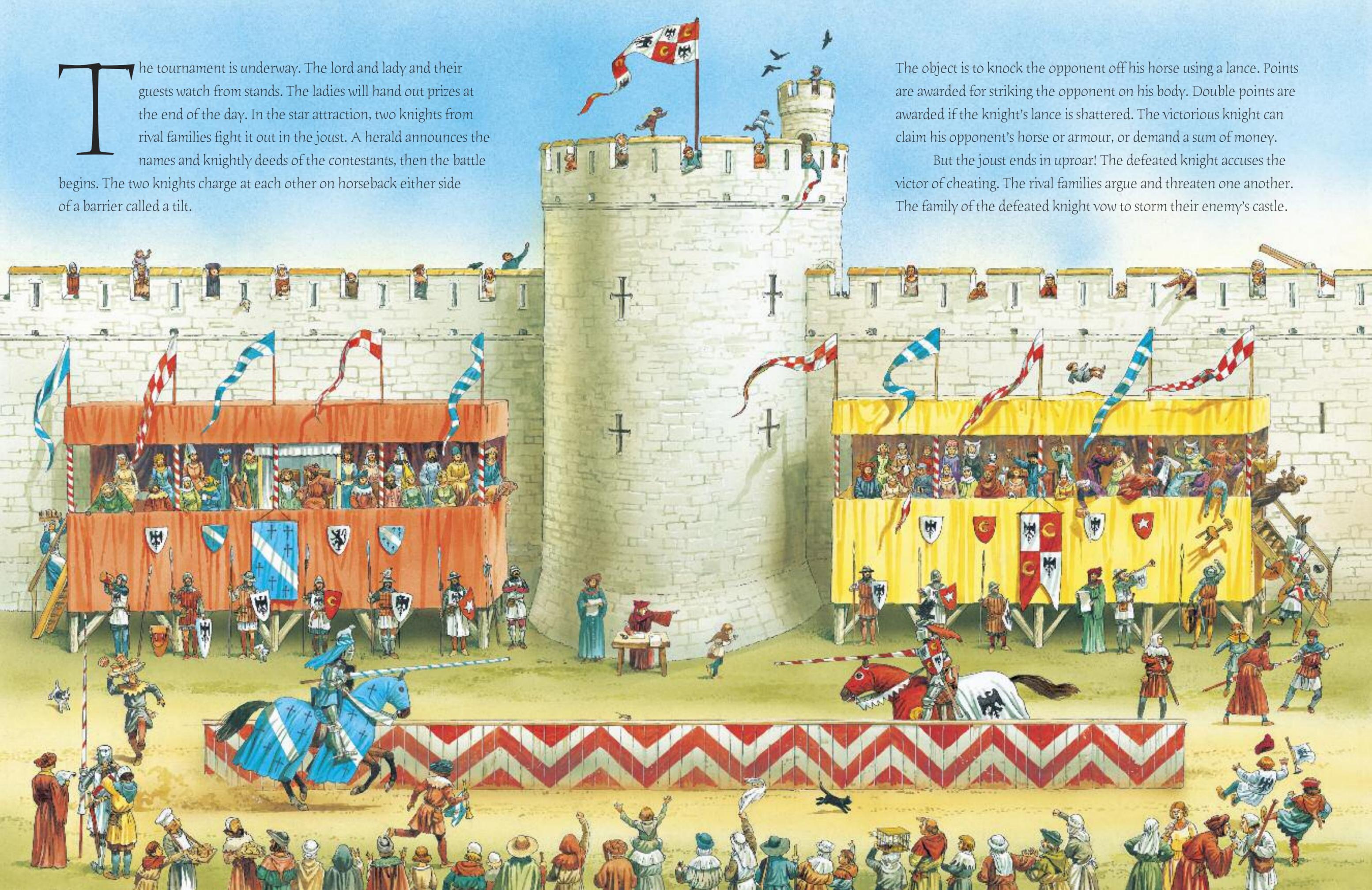
Now the knights, the finest warriors in the kingdom, arrive. Because they all look much alike in their armour, the knights wear special colours and carry a shield with their coat of arms. Their horses wear the same colours as their riders.



The tournament is underway. The lord and lady and their guests watch from stands. The ladies will hand out prizes at the end of the day. In the star attraction, two knights from rival families fight it out in the joust. A herald announces the names and knightly deeds of the contestants, then the battle begins. The two knights charge at each other on horseback either side of a barrier called a tilt.

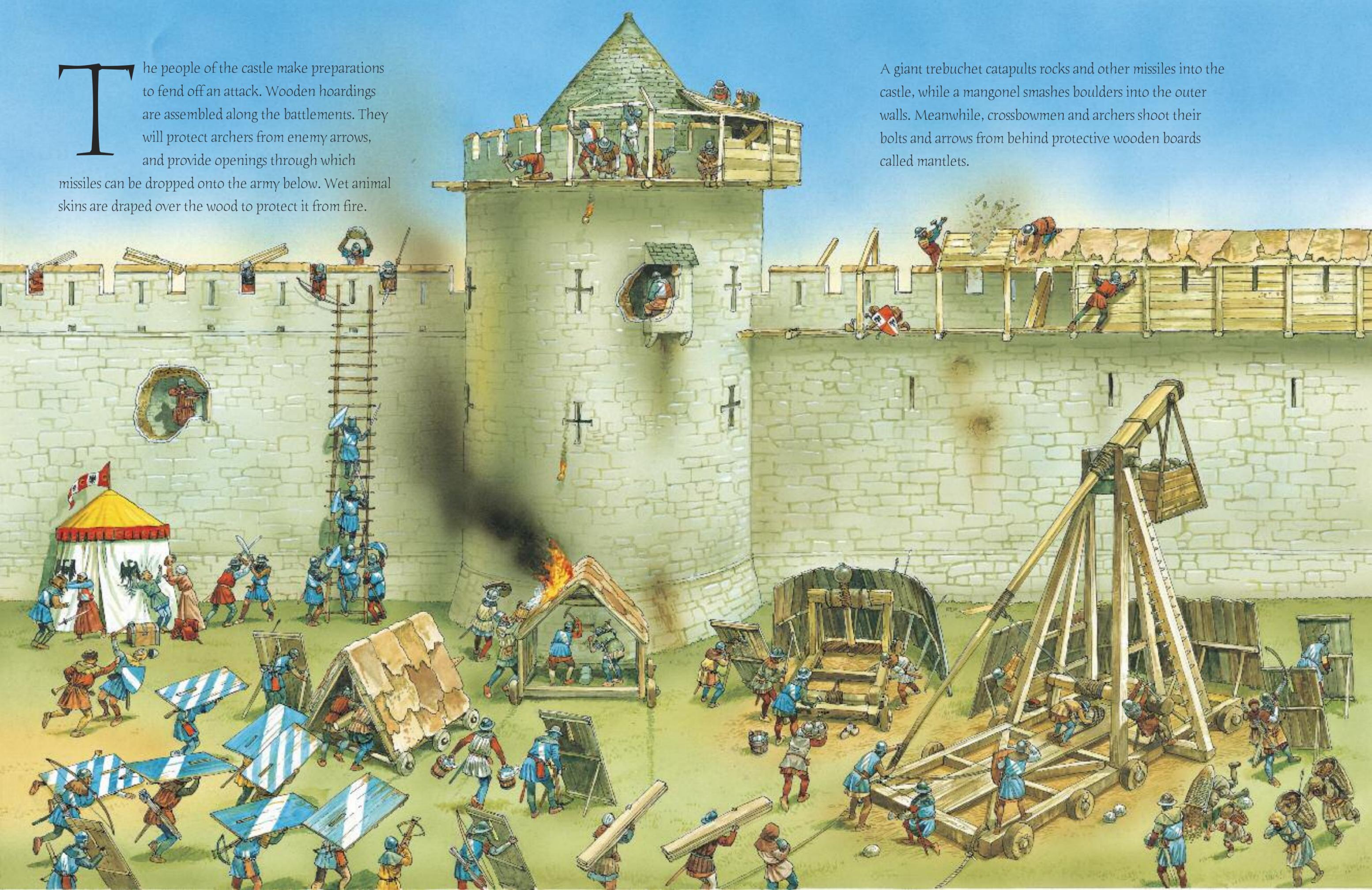
The object is to knock the opponent off his horse using a lance. Points are awarded for striking the opponent on his body. Double points are awarded if the knight's lance is shattered. The victorious knight can claim his opponent's horse or armour, or demand a sum of money.

But the joust ends in uproar! The defeated knight accuses the victor of cheating. The rival families argue and threaten one another. The family of the defeated knight vow to storm their enemy's castle.



The people of the castle make preparations to fend off an attack. Wooden hoardings are assembled along the battlements. They will protect archers from enemy arrows, and provide openings through which missiles can be dropped onto the army below. Wet animal skins are draped over the wood to protect it from fire.

A giant trebuchet catapults rocks and other missiles into the castle, while a mangonel smashes boulders into the outer walls. Meanwhile, crossbowmen and archers shoot their bolts and arrows from behind protective wooden boards called mantlets.



Some soldiers try to break down the castle walls using a battering ram, a tree trunk swung inside a wooden frame. The defenders drop a mattress in front of it to cushion the blows and try to winch the ram away. Meanwhile, the attackers have dug a tunnel under one of the towers...

The besieging army prepares to scale the walls using a covered staircase called a siege tower. Oxen haul on ropes to pull it into position. The men climb up and leap over the battlements. On the ground, soldiers use a ballista – a giant crossbow – to fire flaming bolts at the wooden hoardings.



Finally, the besieging army bring down the walls of the castle. The tunnellers dug a pit under the tower's foundations and propped it up with wooden poles. Then they set the timber alight and fled. The poles gave way, the foundations collapsed and the walls came crashing down. Now the victorious army storms into the castle across piles of rubble. The guards try their best to fight them back but are overrun.

After the siege, the castle is left in ruins. The armies have long since gone, so people from the nearby village come to cart away the rubble: it is just what they need to build or repair their own homes. Meanwhile, a rich baron rides past. He spots the mounds of good building stone and starts thinking how useful it would be for constructing a home for himself...

