MONARCHS, MINIONS & MAYHEM!

THE CARD DRIVEN STRATEGY BOARD GAME



RULEBOOK



Cri lnfinicy Games

MONARCHS, MINIONS & MAYHEM!

THE CARD DRIVEN STRATEGY BOARD GAME



3 TO 8 PLAYERS

AGES 14+

PLAY TIME: 30+ MINUTES

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By:

Cri Infinicy Games

MONARCHS, MINIONS & MAYHEM! THE CARD DRIVEN STRATEGY BOARD GAME

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Introduction:

Greetings,

MONARCH, MINIONS & MAYHEM! a fantasy themed Card-Driven Strategy Board Game with simple to follow rules, that promotes, diplomacy, social interaction and strategy. The engaging gameplay is extremely fun to play, well-balanced with innovative and unique game mechanics that will provide endless hours of entertainment with family & friends. The replay-ability of the game is virtually limitless, fast-paced, strategic and challenging.

Thank you for taking the time to play the game, it is greatly appreciated. I truly hope this game earns a spot on your list of Go-to-Games for Family Game Night. Please send any comments or suggestions you may have about the game and/or, If you would like to be contacted when new information is made available to the email address listed below.

Sincerely,

William Arthur Hays, Jr. Tri-Infinity Games, LLC PO Box 131 Peculiar, MO 64078 Email: info@tri-infinitygames.com www.tri-infinitygames.com

> DEDICATED TO: TO ALL MY FAMILY & FRIENDS, THAT SUPPORTED ME THROUGH OUT THIS ENDEAVOR. I COULDN'T HAVE DONE IT WITHOUT YOU.

> > THANK YOU!



"The Monarch's Dilemma"

By Dennis Young

King Kalan McGregor had sat upon the throne of Kalangragg more than thirty years, yet never had he faced so difficult a decision. The Treaty of Silver River, signed and sealed by his own father, had taken away the angst of war within his country, and McGregor was well-loved for it among his people. But this new elven Queen of Gildenclave, whose own father had, as well, affixed his seal with the elder McGregor's, continued to send missives, hinting at recompense for lands long ago paid for in Kalangragg blood and gold.

The king soon summoned three to his throne room; his trusted Sage, who had served now three generations of McGregor, his Seer Drannee, a woman known for her gift of Sight and telling of the future, and of course, his General, commander of McGregor's legions of battle-hardened soldiers.

"Tell me of my options, Old Connor." The king looked fondly on the weathered face of the Sage before him.

Connor bowed graciously. "Few, Majesty, as the language of the Treaty was poorly written and may be interpreted several ways. While we do not agree with this queen..."

"Elecana," said Drannee, when Connor paused, attempting to remember the name.

"Yes, Queen Eleeana. Majesty, truth be told, we may have little choice but return much of what was granted to your father by the elves. They can be so devious in dealings of land and such."

"Unacceptable," grunted General Torgensonn. He bowed to the Throne. "Majesty, your armies stand ready to defend our rightful winnings. Praise be to your father and his glorious leading of our troops in battle at that time, that the lands won now are home to many of our people. We cannot allow elves to uproot those working the land and bringing to your coffers worthy tidings and taxes."

McGregor sat back, stroking his beard. He knew Torgensonn more than just a soldier, and having wed his sister, Hargretta and made her his queen, was keenly aware Torgensonn eyed the throne himself.

"There are other ways, Majesty," said Drannee softly. McGregor leaned forward, motioning her to continue. "Two I see may be fortuitous for you. One, diplomacy, which you, yourself are most skilled in. The other..."



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Old Connor coughed discretely. "Majesty, you cannot consider this... way."

Torgensonn grinned wickedly. "War? And why not? We outnumber the elves greatly." "Longbows," said Drannee, "and you know the cost." Torgensonn frowned and turned away.

McGregor stood, and the trio before him gave their attention. "We will speak with the elves and see if war may be avoided. There is land aplenty for all, and my thought is, this is but posturing by their queen. However..." He paused, looking at Torgensonn. "Prepare the First Lancers for a march. We will give a show upon the banks of the Silver River for all to see."

Torgensonn bowed deeply, turned on his heel, and left the throne room, guards arrayed about him.

McGregor nodded Connor and Drannee to come closer. "Prepare the way, as you will both go before the elven queen in my stead. You have my full trust to do what is necessary for our land. You may bargain, but only little. If we show weakness now, it will only lead to more demands." "And the general?" Drannee gave a knowing smile.

McGregor nodded. "I will see he is kept busy with the army. Too much there is at stake for war, my friends."

The End!

Dennis Young, Author "The Ardwellian Chronicles"

Game Overview!

Number of Players: 3-8 Or 3-4 (2-Player Teams) Ages: 14+ Playing Time: 30+ Minutes Game Components: Rulebook, Game Board, 108 Custom Playing Cards, 9 Gemstones & 12-sided Dice.

Object of the Game:

Winning a round: The first player that has *Zero* (0) cards in their playing hand at the start of their next turn wins the round and gains 1 Gemstone.

Winning the game: After 3 rounds (Short Campaign), 6 rounds (Standard Campaign) or 9 rounds (Long Campaign) of play the player or team with the lowest casualty point score determined during the End Game Tally of the game (total casualty points minus Gemstone Point Bonus), Wins!

Custom Playing Cards:

The board game contains 4 basic card types: *Scales of Justice, Monarch, Emissary* and *Minion* (1-10) Faction Specific Cards: *Dwarf* (Red), *Elf* (Green), *Human* (Blue) *and Orc* (**Black**).



Scales of Justice Card:

(*Grey*) 50 Casualty Points; Rank 0* (*Stalemate*); or use the *Scales of Justice Overturn Decree*. May be played on top of any card in the *Battlefield*. * - Automatically changes faction currently in play to any faction the player choses. The outcome of the battle is a Stalemate. After the faction change effect is resolved the rank value of the *Scales of Justice* card is zero (0) for the next players turn.

Or, "Overturn Decree": May be played at any time to counter a Battlefield Event or

another played Scales of Justice Card; if played in this manner, put card in the *Royal Decree Area*. It is removed from play for the remainder of the round.









Monarch Card:

Faction Specific; Dwarf (Red), Elf (Green), Human (Blue) and Orc (Black); Rank (M); 25 Casualty Points; Faction Rank = Royalty (Highest Ranked Faction Card); Play using the Monarch Card Royal Decree or Play as a Faction Specific card on the Battlefield.

Or, Royal Decree: on the players' turn the card may be played to invoke any *Revealed Battlefield Event*; if the card is played in this manner it is placed in the *Royal Decree Area* and removed from play for the remainder of the round. There is no limit to the number of Monarch Cards that can be played during the players turn using the *Monarch Royal Decree*. The player can only play Monarch Cards using the *Royal Decree* during the *Royal Decree Phase* and <u>must</u> be played before playing a card onto the *Battlefield*.

Emissary Card:

Trump Card (E); *Dwarf* (Red), *Elf* (Green), *Human* (Blue) *and Orc* (Black); Rank 0*; 25 Casualty Points; "*Stalemate"*: May be played on top of any card in the *Battlefield*. * - Automatically changes faction currently in play to the faction type of the *Emissary Card*. The outcome of the battle is Equal (*Stalemate*). After the faction change effect is resolved the rank value of the *Emissary* Card is zero (0) for the next players turn.

Minion Cards (1-10):

<u>Faction</u> or <u>Rank Specific</u>; Dwarf (Red), Elf (Green), Human (Blue) and Orc (Black); Casualty Points = Face Value 1-10; (1 Low, 10 High); Faction Rank 1-10:

Battlefield Events:

Battlefield Events are considered "Revealed" if they do not have a face down card on the event. If a Minion card is played on the Battlefield that matches the <u>Rank</u> (number) of the "Battlefield Event Wildcard" in play, the player that played the card choses which other player is effected by the event, resolves the event, and continues play as normal.

As the game progresses multiple *Battlefield Events* will be *Revealed*, when that happens the player has the choice to pick which *Battlefield Event* will occur.

A player may not *discard* more cards than the player has that is the target of a Battlefield Event. A player must target another player with a *Battlefield Event*. The player may not target themselves as the primary target for any *Battlefield Event*. Draw card events proceed clockwise from the player initiating the draw; the player that initiates a draw always draws last.

Battlefield Events & Descriptions:

- Ambush force the next player in line to lose their turn. Play proceeds as normal in the direction determined by the outcome of the Battlefield Result.
- **II. Balance of Power** all players *Discard/Draw* a number of cards to equal the number of cards you currently have in your hand.
- *III.* **Changing of the Guard** Switch the current *Battlefield Event Wildcard* (Minion Card) with a Minion Card of your choice from your hand.
- IV. Conscripts you and another player draw a number of cards to equal a full hand (Maximum: 7 Cards). If the Player has more than 7 Cards in their hand, they do not draw or discard any cards.
- V. Desertion choose a Minion Card from your hand. All players (including yourself) discard any Minion Cards that match the rank of the Minion card that you choose.
- VI. Discover Battle Plans pick any player, player must play with cards faceup/revealed until the end of their next turn.
- *VII. Fog of War* pick any player, player must turn cards face down, shuffle and play cards randomly until the end of their next turn. If the card can legally be played, play as normal. If not, draw a card from the *Draw Deck*.
- VIII. Guild Lord pick any player, choose any number of cards you currently

have available in your playing hand. Look at the player's hand and swap an equal amount of cards out of their playing hand into yours.

- *IX.* Second Chance player may *Discard* any number of cards from their hand and replace them with an equal number of cards of their choice underneath the top card in the *Battlefield*.
- *X. Spy* look at the top seven cards of the *Draw Deck* and put them back in any order.
- XI. Thief pick any player, randomly take half the cards rounded up from their hand and add it to yours. In addition, If the player has a Gemstone you may choose to steal it from the player as well. Limited to 1 Gemstone stolen per *Thief Battlefield Event*.
- XII. Twist of Fate all players swap hands in the direction determined by the outcome of the Battlefield Result.

Setup & Dealer:

Players determine which campaign mode shall be played: Short Campaign (*3 rounds*), Standard Campaign (*6 rounds*) or Long Campaign (*9 rounds*). Players may opt unanimously at the end of a short or standard campaign to continue the game to the next campaign level if desired.

Dealer: Either roll high (d12) or If playing a series of games, the winner of the last game is the dealer for initial set-up and the first round of play. The dealer in rounds 2 thru 9 changes to the player with the lowest total casualty points (*score*). Shuffle the 108 custom playing card deck and deals 1 card face down on each one of the 12 *Battlefield Events*.

Each player is then dealt 7 cards. The unused cards are placed face down as the *Draw Deck* and the top card is flipped face up to form the *Battlefield*.



Game Board Initial Set-Up Example:



The example demonstrates how the game board should look after the initial deal and the youngest player has flipped over one of the 12 face down cards in the *Battlefield Event Area*.

The Orc (*Black*) Rank 10 Minion Card is the *Battlefield Event Wildcard* and *Desertion* is the Battlefield Event that is in play (*Revealed*!).

The Elf (*Green*) Rank 3 Minion Card is the top card from the Draw Deck that was flipped face up to form the *Battlefield*.

Order of play begins with the person to the left of the dealer and proceeds in the direction determined by the card played on top of the existing card in the *Battlefield*.

Gameplay:

To start a round, the dealer shuffles the cards in the *Draw Deck*, *Battlefield*, *Battlefield Event Wildcard* and the *Discard* pile. Seven cards are then dealt out to each player from the *Draw Deck*, and the top card is flipped face up to form the battlefield. On the first round either roll high (d12) or if playing a series of games,

the player with the highest score in the previous game flips over any one of the 12 face down cards in the *Battlefield Event Area* that is the *Battlefield Event Wildcard* that is in play (*Revealed!*) for the current round.

On rounds 2 thru 9 the player that "*Won*" the previous round and gained the *Gemstone* flips over any one of the remaining face down cards in the *Battlefield Event Area*, and places it in the area noted on the game board as the "*Battlefield Event Wildcard*".

If the card flipped over for the *Battlefield Event Wildcard* is a Monarch, Emissary, or Scales of Justice Card the player replaces it with any Minion card from their hand and places the Monarch, Emissary or Scales of Justice card in their playing hand. In the event the player does not have a Minion Card, they must draw card(s) from the Draw Deck until a Minion Card can be played as the *Battlefield Event Wildcard*. The player to the dealer's left plays first, unless the first card on the battlefield is a Monarch, Emissary or Scales of Justice card.

If the card flipped over to form the *Battlefield* is a Monarch or Emissary card the cards effect is ignored and a player may play any card that matches the faction type. If the card flipped over to form the battlefield is a Scales of Justice card, the Scales of Justice effect is ignored and the player may play any Minion card.

Order of play begins with the person to the left of the dealer and proceeds in the direction determined by the card played on top of the existing card in the *Battlefield*.

- If the Played card is lower rank = Play Direction Reversed to Counter Clockwise (Right).
- Played card is higher rank = Play Direction Advances Clockwise (Left).
- Played card is of equal rank (*Stalemate*) = player chooses direction of play left or right.

If the Draw Deck is depleted, the battlefield (*except the top card*) is shuffled and becomes the new Draw Deck. Cards in the discard pile may only be shuffled into the Draw Deck at the beginning of each new round.

Minions Revolt:

In the advent a player is unable to draw a card or the number of required cards from the Battlefield *Event:* for any other reason that causes the *Draw Deck* to be completely depleted and the *Battlefield* only having the top card remaining on it, the current *Game Round* is finished (*ended*) and no player is declared the winner.

Players determine casualty points as if the round ended normally however, the Gemstone for the round is not awarded. Play moves on to the next game round, the player with the <u>highest casualty score</u> flips over any one of the remaining face down cards in the *Battlefield Event Area* for the next round of play and places it in the *Battlefield Event Wildcard* area. If it is the last Game Round of the Campaign, the game is over and move on to the End Game Tally.

Player's Turn:

The player's turn consists of 5 sequential phases, beginning with the Royal Decree Phase and ending with the Battlefield Result Phase which ends the players turn and determines which player (*left or right*) in line will play next.

Turn Sequence: "Order of Play"

1. <u>Royal Decree Phase</u>: Player may choose to play a *Monarch Card* using the card's <u>Royal Decree</u>. The Royal Decree invokes any one *Revealed Battlefield Event* that the player chooses; if the Monarch card is played in this manner it is placed in the *Discard* pile and removed from play for the remainder of the round. There is no limit to the number of Monarch Cards that can be played during the players Royal Decree Phase using the *Monarch Royal Decree*. Regardless of whether or not a player plays a Monarch Card during the Royal Decree Phase, the player proceeds to the *Battlefield Play Phase* or *Draw Phase* of their turn.

- 2. <u>Battlefield Play Phase</u>: The player has several options to choose from, *if* available.
- The player is not required to play a playable card in their playing hand if he/she chooses not to.
- The player may play an <u>Emissary</u> or <u>Scales of Justice</u> card from their hand on top of any card in the <u>Battlefield</u>. Automatically changes faction currently in play to the faction type of the <u>Emissary</u> card. Continue on to the <u>Battlefield</u>

Result Phase: The outcome of the battle is a Stalemate. After the faction change effect is resolved the rank value *Emissary* card is zero (0) for the next players turn.

- The player may play a <u>Monarch</u> card as a Faction card from their hand on top of the card in the *Battlefield*. If the Monarch card either matches the faction or rank of the card in the *Battlefield*, continue on to the *Battlefield Result Phase*.
- The player may play a <u>Minion</u> card as a Faction card from their hand on top of the card in the *Battlefield*. If the Minion card either matches the faction or rank of the card in the *Battlefield*, continue on to the *Battlefield Result Phase*.
- The player may play a <u>Minion</u> card that matches the <u>Rank</u> of the Battlefield Event Wildcard that invokes any one of the Revealed! Battlefield Event that the player chooses. Resolve the Battlefield Event, and continue on to the Battlefield Result Phase.
- 3. <u>Draw Phase</u>: If the player was unable to play a card or chose not to play a card onto the Battlefield during the Battlefield Play Phase, they <u>must</u> draw a card from the Draw Deck.
- If the card drawn by the player can be played as specified in sequential order of the preceding *Royal Decree Phase* or *Battlefield Play Phase*, the player may opt to do so.
- The player is not required to play the drawn card even if it is a playable card.
- <u>Pass Phase</u>: (end of players turn) If the player does not or cannot play a card onto the Battlefield, the player passes and play moves on to the next left (clockwise) player.

5. <u>Battlefield Result Phase</u>: (end of players turn) If the player has played a card on to the *Battlefield*, the *Battlefield Result* is determined by the card played on top of the existing card in the *Battlefield*.

- Played card is lower rank = Play Direction Reversed to Counter Clockwise (Right).
- Played card is higher rank = Play Direction Advances Clockwise (Left).
- Played card is of equal rank (*Stalemate*) = player choses direction of play left or right.

Scoring:

When a player has won the round, the other players tally the casualty point value for each card they have in their hand (listed on each card; see *Card Values & Casualty Points*). The players' total casualty points for the round is recorded on the scoring pad as their score for the completed round. The player or team with the lowest casualty score (*Modified by Gemstone Point Bonuses*) after Short Campaign (*3 rounds*), Standard Campaign (*6 rounds*) or Long Campaign (*9 rounds*) of play wins the game.

Card Values & Casualty Points:

- *Emissary Cards*: Trump Card; Rank Value = 0*; 25 Casualty Points
- Minion Cards (1-10): Rank Value = 1-10; 1-10 Casualty Points (10 high; 1 low)
- Monarch Cards: Rank Value = Royalty (Highest Faction Rank); 25 Casualty Points
- Scales of Justice Cards: Trump Card; Rank Value = 0*; 50 Casualty Points
- *Gemstones*: Reduces Final Casualty Point Total by 25 Casualty Points for each Gemstone the player or team possesses during the *End Game Tally*.



Penalties & Rule Violations:

It is illegal to reveal, tell or look at another player or teammate's hand or trade cards of any sort with another player unless prompted by a *Battlefield Event*. If a player sorts through the *Draw Deck*, *Battlefield*, *Discard* pile, a face down card in the *Battlefield Event Area* or lays down a card face up not during their turn or without being prompted by a Rule or Battlefield Event they must draw X number of cards to equal a full playing hand (7 cards total), suffer a penalty of 100 casualty points and forfeit 1 Gemstone (*if available*).

Team Play:

Each 2-player team combines their individual score together during the End Game

Tally for a team total score. Seating order starting with the first player on team 1, players seated clockwise as listed below.

<u># of Teams</u>	Player Seating
3 Teams	1-A, 2-A, 3-A, <mark>1-B</mark> , 2-B <mark>&</mark> 3-B
4 Teams:	1-A, 2-A, 3-A, 4-A, 1-B, 2-B, 3-B & 4-B

Game Definitions:

Battlefield: The area noted on the game board where a player plays a card from their playing hand. The card is placed face up on top of the card that is already in place.

Battlefield Events & Area: The area of the game board that includes the 12 Battlefield Events with instructions for how each event effects the game and the players. Battlefield events are considered "*Revealed*" if they do not have a face down card on the event.

If a card played on the *Battlefield* matches the <u>*Rank*</u> (number) of the "*Battlefield Event Wildcard*" in play, resolve the event and continue play as normal. As the game progresses multiple *Battlefield Events* will be *Revealed*, when that happens the player has the choice to pick which *Battlefield Event* will occur.

Battlefield Event Wildcard: The minion card that is flipped over from any one of the 12 face down cards in the Battlefield Event Area that is placed face up in the *Battlefield Event Wildcard* section of the game board. If a card is played on the *Battlefield* that matches the <u>**Rank**</u> (number) of the "Battlefield Event Wildcard" in play, resolve the Battlefield Event and continue play as normal.

Battlefield Result: The Battlefield Result is determined by the card played on the top card of the Battlefield.

- Played card is lower rank = Play Direction Reversed to Counter Clockwise (Right)
- Played card is higher rank = Play Direction Advances Clockwise (Left)
- Played card is of equal rank (*Stalemate*) = player choses direction of play left or right.

Campaign: Players determine which campaign mode shall be played: Short Campaign (*3 rounds*), Standard Campaign (*6 rounds*) or Long Campaign (*9 rounds*). Players may opt unanimously at the end of a short or standard campaign to continue the game to the next campaign level if desired.

Casualty Points: Points gained by a player determined by the value of the card type that remain in their playing hand when a player wins the round. Winning the game: After 3 rounds (Short Campaign), 6 rounds (Standard Campaign) or 9 rounds (Long Campaign) of play the player or team with the lowest casualty point score determined during the End Game Tally of the game (total casualty points minus gemstone point bonus), Wins!

Direction of Play (standard): The direction of play by default always goes to the left (*clockwise*) of the player that has finished their turn (pass), unless otherwise determined by the current *Battlefield Result*.

Discard: The area of the game board where cards that are removed from play (*discarded*) for the remainder of the round are placed (*discard pile*).

Draw Deck: The remaining cards in the deck of cards that are placed face down on the game board area marked Draw Deck. This is the deck a player draws a card from.

End Game Tally: (Total Casualty Points minus the Gemstone point bonus of 25 points for each Gemstone the player has acquired) After 3 rounds (Short Campaign), 6 rounds (Standard Campaign) or 9 rounds (Long Campaign) of play the player or team with the lowest casualty point score determined during the End Game Tally of the game, Wins!

Faction, Faction Rank & Rank:

- Faction: Dwarf (Red), Elf (Green), Human (Blue) and Orc (Black).
- Faction Rank: The power level of a specific card.
- *Rank*: The power level of a specific card regardless of faction, race or color.

Faction Specific: The card may only be played on top of the *Battlefield* card in play, if it matches the faction (race & color) of the card that is on top of the *Battlefield*.

Gemstone: The first player that has zero cards in their playing hand at the start of their turn *wins the round* and gains 1 *Gemstone*. The Gemstone reduces the final casualty point total by 25 Casualty Points for each Gemstone the player or team possesses during the end game tally.

Out of Play: The area on the game board that a card is put into that is removed from play for the rest of the game.

Playing Hand: The 1-7+ cards a player has in their hand to play the game with.

Revealed: Battlefield Events are considered "Revealed" if they do not have a face down card on the event.

Round: A round begins with the first player's turn and ends when it comes to the first player that has **Zero** (0) cards in their playing hand at the start of their turn.

Featured Artist:

Paul Nelson

Graphic Design: Monarchs, Minions & Mayhem!

Founder & Game Designer : Paragon Notion & "The Ultimate Hero" - RPG

Paul Nelson graduated from Johnson County Community College in 2009 with an Associates of Applied Science & Graphic Design Degree. He founded his company Paragon Notion in 2012, developing the table top role-playing game "*The Ultimate Hero*" - RPG. He has played a key role in the Development, Artwork, Graphic Design & Layout for Monarchs, Minions & Mayhem!

Dennis Young

www.ardwel.com

"The Monarch's Dilemma" (Game Box & Rulebook)

Author of "The Ardwellian Chronicles" - Secret Fire The Ardwellian Chronicles Book One, Dark Way of Anger The Ardwellian Chronicles Book Two, Secret s of the Second Sun The Ardwellian Chronicles Book Three, Kaanan's Way The Ardwellian Chronicles Book Four, Blood Secret The Ardwellian Chronicles Book Five, Blades of Alliance: The Thirteen Swords of Power, The Ardwellian Chronicles Continuing Tales & Champions: The Heroes of Ardwel The Ardwellian Chronicles Continuing Tales . © 2016 DENNIS YOUNG, All available thru Amazon.com

Eric Lofgren

www.ericlofgren.net

Eric Lofgren Presents— "Dwarf Warrior, Female Elf Fighter, Male Human Fighter, Orc Champion, Orc versus Elf, Warrior King © 2015 Eric Lofgren, used with permission. All rights reserved.

Eric Lofgren was born and lives in Western Canada. He's had a long history of working in one graphic field or another. Beginning with two years working in a commercial sign shop and 10 years running his own sign business. Also one year as a digital photo-retoucher, a year full time as a landscape painter and two years as a tattoo artist. And finally, a recognized freelance illustrator in the RPG and CCG markets since 2000.

Currently his tasks as a commercial illustrator include cover art, collectible card art and interior book illustrations. All in color, black & white or grayscale. As well as computer game conceptual design.

Thomas Cole – American, 1801 - 1848

acquired 2014 by the National Gallery of Art.



The Departure (Game Box, Game Board, Rulebook Front Cover & Interior Pages) 1837 Thomas Cole oil on canvas overall: 100.3 × 161.6 cm (39 1/2 × 63 5/8 in.) framed: 133.4 × 194.6 × 15.9 cm (52 1/2 × 76 5/8 × 6 1/4 in.) Corcoran Collection (Gift of William Wilson Corcoran) 2014.79.13 Inscription: Iower center right: TC /1[8]37 Provenance: Commissioned by William P. Van Rensselaer, Esq., Albany. Purchased by 1853 by William Wilson Corcoran [1798-1888], Washington; gift 10 May 1869 to the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington;

In the mid-19th century, pure landscape pictures were traditionally ranked lower than other subject matter, such as themes from history, mythology, literature, or religion. Thomas Cole sought to create what he called a "higher style of landscape" that blended narrative elements into carefully executed scenes from nature. His use of two canvases allowed him to build his narrative to even greater technical and emotional heights. The Departure introduces a troop of knights embarking on a heroic crusade in the early summer led by their lord on his valiant white horse. In The Return, a smaller group — weary and defeated — trudges home in the autumn dusk; they carry the dying lord, his riderless horse trailing behind.

The two landscapes were commissioned as a pair by wealthy landowner William Paterson Van Rensselaer in December 1836, specifying only that the paintings should depict morning and evening. Cole had recently enjoyed critical and popular success for his epic five-canvas series, The Course of Empire (1836, The New-York Historical Society) completed earlier in the year, which likely made Van Rensselaer choose him for the project. That Cole achieved his goal of a "higher style of landscape" among his contemporaries is reflected in the praise the paintings received in an 1837 New-York Mirror review:

These pictures represent Morning and Evening, or Sunrise and Sunset; and are, merely from that point of view, invaluable. They contrast the glowing warmth of one, with the cool tints and broad shadows of the other; and to do this is the work of a master, who has studied nature and loves her....Not only this is done, but a story is told by the poet-painter, elucidating at once, the times of chivalry and feudal barbarism, and the feelings with which man rushes forth in the morning of day and of life, and the slow and funereal movements which attend the setting of his sun.



The Return (Game Box & Rulebook Back Cover) 1837 Thomas Cole oil on canvas overall: 100.3 × 161.4 cm (39 1/2 × 63 9/16 in.) framed: 132.7 × 194.6 × 15.2 cm (52 1/4 × 76 5/8 × 6 in.) Corcoran Collection (Gift of William Wilson Corcoran) 2014.79.12 Inscription: center left on monument: T Cole / 1837; lower center right: T Cole. 1837

Provenance: Commissioned by William P. Van Rensselaer, Esq., Albany. Purchased by 1853 by William Wilson Corcoran [1798-1888], Washington; gift 10 May 1869 to the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington; acquired 2014 by the National Gallery of Art.

Reference: National Gallery of Art

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