

**EDWARD THE
BLACK PRINCE: AN
EPIC DRAMA**

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Edward the Black Prince: An Epic Drama by Douglas Sladen

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DOUGLAS SLADEN

**EDWARD THE
BLACK PRINCE: AN
EPIC DRAMA**

Edward, the Black Prince.

Edward the Black Prince

An Epic Drama

BY
DOUGLAS, SLADEN, 1856-

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BY SPECIAL PERMISSION TO
ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON, D.C.L.,
POET LAUREATE.

O bugle-voice of English song,
O you who made the Light Brigade
A proverb, to whose lyre belong
King Arthur and his Knights, who laid
Our last great Hero in his tomb
With words which, like a cannonade
Fired o'er a soldier's burial, bomb,
To you I dedicate my stage.
My hero met an unripe doom,
Yet with the stark knights of his age
Had time to win for Englishmen
The character on History's page
Of fighting out the one ~~as~~ ten
And conquering. Did you not love
So jealously our England—then
I had not ventured thus to prove
Your good-will, but I seek her fame
So staunchly, that I hoped to move
In all, who pride them on the name
Of Englishmen, a kindly tone.
And therefore to your feet I came
Unflinching—you, whom all would own
The Raphael of English verse
For perfect sense of beauty shewn
In taste and work; who brought our terse
And homely Anglo-Saxon speech,
Which men were ceasing to rehearse,
Back to our song. And I beseech
Read gently—for though I ill tell
My tale, it loves our England well.

D. B. W. S.

To the Reader.

I HAVE called this drama epic, because it contains much not essential to the dramatic development, but which it was difficult to exclude, since the Prince, dramatic though his life may be, was essentially an epic character living in an epic age. An epic, pure and simple, few would venture to attempt to-day, even if there were not already, dealing with this very age, the great prose-epic of Froissart. I have thought it best therefore to use the dramatic form, filling in, to give an epic completeness to the picture, certain passages in the Prince's life and times which would be superfluous in strict drama. Shakspeare has lent his authority to the admission of this epic element into historical plays.

Before beginning to write, I worked at all the historical materials known to me in the libraries of the British Museum and Canterbury Cathedral, in the desire to conform strictly with actual fact, wherever we have an explicit account, and to know where the absence of detailed information left one free to dramatise. In this way I learned, for instance, that I could use considerable latitude in my conception of the Prince's wife—of whom I could find no complete and authentic account, but had to dig up information piece-meal from old chroniclers and county historians.

TO THE READER.

It is wearisome to recount a list of authorities. Speaking generally, I have followed Froissart, supplemented by other contemporary writers and subjected to the light of modern criticism, but I must acknowledge a special debt to Longman's Edward III.

The fourteenth century saw the death-blow given to Knight errantry just as the fifteenth century saw the fall of the Barons. The day when men could win battles by mere personal prowess—one strong knight in his armour of proof scattering dismay through an army, like Audley at Poitiers, was over when England's long bowmen reached the perfection which they attained under Edward III. In Henry V.'s wars we hear no more of the feats of Mannys and Audleys; war, like painting and other arts, was emerging from its second childhood. But in the age of the Black Prince chivalry was at its zenith. I have chosen this period, therefore, to depict the life and death, not only of the Prince, but also of chivalry, of which he was one of the most typical, as well as the last, exponents. Chivalry concerned itself only with knights and ladies, with men and women of gentle birth: it was reckless of the sufferings, of the very existence of the common people; nay, it rather resented that there should be any, except as retainers of the noble. But, though it was so hopelessly immoral in this particular, we cannot be blind to its true elements of greatness, its honourableness, its fearlessness, and its international amenities of courtesy in an age when international law there was none, save in the discretion of the Popes.

TO THE READER.

Chivalry was a mother of heroes. It would be difficult to pick out any age with men more heroic in their different types than the Prince himself, stern, eager, impatient of obstacles, and with a prayer on his lips as he calmly surveyed desperate odds; or his contrast Chandos, gay with a careless smile or a snatch of song, as he rode to almost certain destruction; or Manny, conspicuous among them all for contempt of danger and disparity of numbers. These men—men who have made the name of Englishman proverbial for individual strength and courage—are the personages of this play. I have chosen this subject, in spite of the amount of labour involved, and the chance of failure, because I consider the noblest poetry to be that inspired by pride in one's Country.

In one passage I have imitated Tennyson's method, and in another Matthew Arnold's, because they seemed to be exactly the right forms of expression for the particular circumstances there treated.

It is history that has obliged me to do violence to my hero-worship in making Chandos boast just before his fall, and made me sacrifice dramatic effect here and there, as students of the period will perceive.

I may mention in the matter of typography, that I have put capital initials to words used in a technical sense, such as *Lances*, when meaning men-at-arms; *Bows*, when meaning bowmen; *Banners*, when meaning bannerets; the Royal *We* and *Us*, and the like.

DOUGLAS B. W. SLADEN.

PALAZZO SHNEIDERFF, FLORENCE,

Nov. 1886.

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